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Situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 2387 (2017), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) until 15 November 2018 and requested me to report on its implementation on 15 February 2018 and thereafter every four months. The present report is submitted pursuant to that resolution.

II. Political situation

2. In March 2018, the Central African Republic celebrated the two-year anniversary of the inauguration of the President, Faustin Archange Touadera, which had ended the country's transition and marked its return to constitutional order. The anniversary provided an opportunity for the country and its international partners to take stock of the significant achievements over recent years, as well as the numerous challenges remaining.

3. The Government has continued to make progress towards the restoration of State authority throughout the country, including in the deployment of all prefects and the majority of sub-prefects; the deployment of magistrates; improved provision of basic social services; and the revitalization of the defence and security sector, a key national priority. Progress remains slow and fragile, however, with threats of reversal in the face of continuing activity by armed groups, the weakness of State institutions outside Bangui, and scarce financial and human resources. Clashes between armed groups and tensions over economic interests continue to impede the ability of local authorities to effectively restore State services, especially security, judiciary and financial services, and to ensure the protection of civilians.

4. The security situation in Bangui and other parts of the country has deteriorated since April 2018, amid a resurgence of sectarian rhetoric and intercommunal strife, which has undermined popular trust in the State and in the national defence and security forces. Those developments have also further polarized national politics, characterized by increased efforts to undermine the President's authority and the credibility of MINUSCA, which has faced criticism due to challenges in rapidly restoring security in Bangui following its joint operation with the defence and security forces in the city in early April.

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5. Despite heightened security concerns and the risk of unravelling of progress achieved over the past years, key State institutions have continued to function. The National Assembly held its first ordinary session for 2018 from 1 March to 31 May. The election of the new Executive Bureau of the Assembly resulted in the nomination of members from parliamentary groups aligned with the presidential majority of Mr. Touadera. From 17 to 19 March, the International Organization of la Francophonie convened a high-level retreat for officials of government and State institutions as part of efforts to improve collaboration among State institutions, particularly between the National Assembly and the Government.

Support for political dialogue and national reconciliation

6. The panel of facilitators for the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic conducted its second round of consultations with the 14 recognized armed groups from February to April, during which the panel received their demands and proposals. In May, Mr. Touadera established a committee of 15 advisers within his Cabinet to examine the demands put forward by armed groups and consolidate their grievances, both of which would serve as the basis for future dialogue between armed groups and the Government. Throughout the consultations, the panel expressed disappointment that violence against civilians continued unabated in a number of regions, even as armed groups claimed to be committed to dialogue. Although grievances seemed largely resolvable through political means, the panel noted that the commitment of some armed groups to peacefully addressing those issues remained questionable. The panel's urging that armed groups avoid destabilizing military activities and attacks on civilians has yet to reduce violence in several areas.

7. International support, particularly from the United Nations, for the efforts of the African Initiative and the Government remains strong and includes extensive political, technical and logistics assistance. On 11 April in Bangui, the Government hosted the first meeting of the International Support Group on the Central African Republic, co-chaired by the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the United Nations. My Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, Smaïl Chergui, co-chaired the meeting, which was held during their joint visit to the country. The primary objective of the meeting was to promote coherent and sustained engagement in the ongoing stabilization and recovery efforts. The event concluded with a call for strengthened development partnerships and improved coordination among regional and international partners. Similar expressions of support were made at the high-level meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission on the Central African Republic and at the high-level meeting convened by the President of the General Assembly on peacebuilding and sustaining peace on 24 and 25 April, both of which Mr. Touadera attended in New York.

8. In order to reduce transhumance-related violence, improve regional trade and security collaboration and better manage the return of refugees, the Government took initial steps to reactivate joint bilateral commissions between the Central African Republic and Cameroon, Chad and the Sudan, as recommended at the ECCAS Summit in 2017 and further encouraged by the International Support Group during its meeting in Bangui in April. Those commissions formerly played an important role in limiting cross-border movements of arms and armed groups.

9. In March, my Special Representative for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Office for Central Africa, François Louncény Fall, visited Bangui together with the Secretary-General of ECCAS, Ahmad Allam-Mi, to support the African Initiative and regional cooperation. They encouraged the panel to ensure greater regional engagement in support of ongoing stabilization and dialogue efforts and

called upon armed groups to cease hostilities immediately. During that visit and two subsequent missions in April and May, my Special Representative also consulted Mr. Touadera and key ministers in Bangui to galvanize regional cooperation between the Government of the Central African Republic and its neighbours.

10. Complementary to the dialogue efforts led by the African Initiative, MINUSCA supported government-led local peace and reconciliation initiatives. Such processes serve as frameworks for reducing violence, building trust between communities, facilitating the return of displaced persons and strengthening local capacity to resolve conflicts, as well as provide a platform for early warning. In areas where agreements were reached, implementation and monitoring mechanisms were established under the leadership of local authorities, with the involvement of women, youth and traditional leaders.

11. Agreements signed in Bangassou, Batangafo and Bria in the first quarter of the year, which involved armed groups, as well as civil society, have led to a sharp reduction in violence, greater freedom of movement for the population and the launch of local disarmament processes. The Bangassou peace and reconciliation process, jointly launched by Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalainga and Imam Omar Kobine Layama, was followed by the handover of 1,456 weapons from local armed militias through a community violence reduction programme.

12. Several local peace processes, including in Bangassou, Bria and Kaga Bandoro, provided for the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons to their homes and neighbourhoods as a key national reconciliation priority. In Bria, such efforts are being enhanced by public outreach through community radio and joint operations between MINUSCA and national defence and security forces to arrest the leaders of criminal groups involved in attacks against the internally displaced population.

13. MINUSCA has also supported the Government in its efforts to promote reconciliation through the media. Following the joint operation in the third district of Bangui on 8 April, ex-Séléka groups threatened to retaliate against Christian communities in areas under their control, escalating intercommunal tensions. MINUSCA immediately intervened to counter incendiary rhetoric, dispel rumours and reassure vulnerable communities through radio messaging and public meetings. The High Council for Communication issued a statement in May condemning hate speech and warning those responsible of legal consequences.

14. Women's participation in the formal national dialogue processes at the national level has been limited. MINUSCA continues to advocate and support women's participation in the African Initiative. Women and youth remain a vibrant force and are key mediators at the community level, assuming leadership roles in mediation and reconciliation efforts, including in Bambari, Bangassou, Batangafo, Bocaranga and Bria.

III. Security situation

15. Notwithstanding some progress in the political process, the security situation continues to be marred by armed confrontations and violence against civilians in several areas of the country, as well as attacks against humanitarian personnel and peacekeepers. Sectarian rhetoric and the exploitation of religious differences have contributed to an increase in intercommunal violence, as well as manipulated popular hostility towards MINUSCA and other international actors. Armed groups such as the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) have tried to exploit sectarian tensions by threatening renewed military offensives against Bangui, despite committing to dialogue.

16. In Bangui, since April, the security situation has been marked by renewed violence, driven by the activities of criminal gangs and intercommunal tensions. Gangs involved in extortion rackets and illegal taxation frequently destabilized the third district of Bangui and threatened the safety and well-being of local residents. Despite mediation efforts, tensions escalated in the third district's predominantly Muslim neighbourhood of PK5, as criminal group leaders adopted increasingly aggressive postures, including attacking MINUSCA patrols, which prompted the community to call upon the Government and MINUSCA to intervene.

17. On 8 April, MINUSCA and the Central African defence and security forces launched a joint operation in the PK5 neighbourhood to arrest and disarm criminal group members. During the operation, MINUSCA seized weapons, ammunition and narcotics. Seven individuals were arrested, although the criminal group leaders escaped. Live fire was exchanged, resulting in 11 peacekeepers injured and 2 individuals killed and 45 injured. In subsequent days, ongoing violent clashes in PK5 and surrounding neighbourhoods resulted in more casualties. On 10 April, a MINUSCA patrol sent to stop fighting on the edge of PK5 came under attack by heavily armed criminal groups. The ensuing exchange of fire left one peacekeeper dead and eight injured. At least 30 individuals, many of them thought to have participated in the attack against MINUSCA, were killed and more than 190 others injured. On 11 April, a group of approximately 200 people demonstrated outside MINUSCA headquarters, carrying the bodies of 16 individuals allegedly killed in the clashes.

18. Several weeks of volatility in the capital culminated on 1 May in a deadly attack on a Catholic church by elements of one of the PK5 armed criminal groups, in retaliation for the arrest of one of its members by internal security forces. The attack resulted in the killing of a prominent peace activist cleric, Abbé Albert Toungoumale Baba, and nine other civilians who were in the church. Retaliatory violence against Muslims surged and included the destruction of several mosques, the killing of at least three civilians from the Muslim community and the looting of Muslim-owned shops and homes. In support of national security forces, MINUSCA dispatched patrols to secure the city. Total casualties were estimated at 22 deaths and 185 wounded that day.

19. FPRC, claiming that the joint operation in Bangui on 8 April was an attack against Muslims, sought to capitalize on the unrest in Bangui to mobilize other ex-Séléka factions. FPRC and the Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) staged demonstrations against MINUSCA in Bambari, Bria, Kaga Bandoro and Ndélé. On 14 April, the FPRC leader Abdoulaye Hissène travelled from Ndélé to Kaga Bandoro with a group of his fighters, threatening military movement towards Bangui and attempting to reunite the Séléka coalition, which was disbanded in 2014, although other armed groups have refused to ally with FPRC.

20. MINUSCA reinforced its positions south of Kaga Bandoro to prevent armed group movement towards the capital. It also conducted air strikes against FPRC vehicles seeking to bypass MINUSCA checkpoints. In this context, the national authorities, in coordination with MINUSCA, deployed a detachment of 100 elements of the Central African Armed Forces trained by the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic in Ndomete and Sibut.

21. Civil society groups and several political, religious and community leaders condemned the FPRC threats and the ongoing criminal violence in Bangui. Mr. Touadera declared three days of national mourning after the violence on 1 May and condemned the attacks on all religious institutions. The National Assembly also called for resolute action from national authorities to improve security and arrest criminal groups.

22. The Mission responded to the evolving security challenges with an integrated approach combining dialogue and negotiation, military and police pressure, and programmatic interventions to reduce youth involvement in armed violence.

23. In Mambéré-Kadéï and Nana-Mambéré prefectures, a small group of armed Fulani known as "Siriri" established a presence and engaged in cattle theft and illegal taxation. On 22 April, the group attacked a MINUSCA patrol in Mambéré-Kadéï, which resulted in five Siriri combatants killed, including the leader of the group.

24. In Ouham-Pendé prefecture, the situation has improved since my previous report. Joint operations between MINUSCA and the national armed forces successfully decreased the number of attacks on civilians and clashes between armed groups in most parts of the prefecture. The operations forced the Mouvement national pour la libération de la Centrafrique (MNLC) to retreat to the far north-west of the prefecture along the border with Chad. MNLC fighters, however, continued to attack civilians and loot villages in that area, hampering the return of displaced persons.

25. In Ouham prefecture, the security situation continues to be marred by competition between the Révolution et justice and the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC) armed groups for control over transit and transhumance corridors around Markounda. MINUSCA-facilitated mediation efforts between the groups produced a ceasefire agreement and commitment to removing checkpoints, which allowed the return of many persons displaced by the recent violence. Other armed groups continued to operate in the area. In February and March, unidentified armed elements ambushed MINUSCA, robbed humanitarian staff and killed civilians along the Boguila-Markounda axis, including six national education experts near Markounda.

26. Security in the centre of the country continued to suffer as a result of fierce competition between UPC and anti-balaka associated militias vying for control over natural resources and trade routes along the Alindao-Dimbi axis and around Ippy. Civilians repeatedly sought refuge near MINUSCA bases in the area following clashes. On 3 April, presumed anti-balaka associated fighters attacked the temporary MINUSCA base in Tagbara, killing 1 peacekeeper and injuring 12. In mid-May, the security situation significantly deteriorated in Bambari, following several rumours of the killing of Muslims. In retaliation, armed individuals from Muslim neighbourhoods, backed by some UPC fighters, attacked the police and gendarmerie stations and fired on a joint patrol of internal security forces and a MINUSCA formed police unit, killing one national police officer and injuring two others. That situation led to the displacement of over 1,000 civilians. The premises of several international non-governmental organizations were looted. Since then, regular incidents have been reported, including confrontations among anti-balaka elements, armed individuals from Muslim neighbourhoods and UPC fighters, as well as attacks against the population, MINUSCA troops and the gendarmerie and police stations by those same actors.

27. In Bria, the arrest of anti-balaka leader "Ramazani" on 16 March initially triggered demonstrations and attacks against leaders in the internally displaced persons camp and beneficiaries of a community violence reduction programme. Subsequently, there was a significant reduction in violence in Bria.

28. In the south-east, the situation continues to be marred by criminal activities and attacks against civilians driven by a cycle of attacks and reprisals between UPC and anti-balaka associated militias.

29. Attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army continued mainly in the Haute-Kotto and Mbomou prefectures: 12 attacks allegedly occurred during the reporting period, resulting in 38 abductions.

30. The volatile security situation and the non-existent road infrastructure in the south-east continue to pose challenges for troop mobility and capacity to project force, as well as for MINUSCA capacity to protect its convoys. Anti-balaka associated local militias continued to harass MINUSCA logistics convoys along the Alindao-Bangassou axis, the main supply line in the south-east of the country. Those actions caused considerable delays in resupplying peacekeepers deployed in the area and forced the Mission to resort to expensive air supply for urgent materials. In February, anti-balaka fighters ambushed MINUSCA on two occasions along the Alindao-Dimbi axis, injuring five peacekeepers. On 17 May, a MINUSCA logistics convoy was ambushed on the same axis by suspected anti-balaka elements, which resulted in the death of one peacekeeper and injury to eight, while approximately 40 anti-balaka elements were killed.

31. The first months of 2018 saw frequent armed confrontations in Bangassou between local anti-balaka associated militias and internally displaced persons who had sought refuge at the Catholic mission since May 2017. In March, armed fighters frequently blocked humanitarian access to the Catholic mission, robbed humanitarian staff and regularly fired on MINUSCA, injuring two peacekeepers. Reinforced MINUSCA patrols in Bangassou and the protection of the internally displaced persons site, supported by the work of the local mediation committee and large-scale community violence reduction programming, have led to a significant drop in violence since April. On 9 April, a delegation of religious leaders from Bangui led by Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalainga and Imam Omar Kobine Layama negotiated a preliminary agreement, with the participation of local militias, civil society and local authorities.

Operationalization of internal security forces and national armed forces

32. In February, the Ministers of Defence and the Interior adopted a joint five-year concept for the immediate and long-term deployment of the defence and internal security forces, with support from MINUSCA, in coordination with the European Union Military Training Mission. The Government presented logistical, equipment and financial requirements for the joint concept to donors in a special session of the International Support Group on 12 April. On 15 May, I sent a letter (S/2018/463) to the President of the Security Council providing recommendations on the type of support that MINUSCA could provide for the progressive redeployment of the national armed forces units trained or certified by the European Union Mission and accompanying internal security forces.

33. As part of the pilot project on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, on 11 May training was completed for 232 demobilized members of armed groups who were integrated into the national armed forces.

Safety and security of United Nations personnel

34. Security remains a serious challenge for United Nations personnel in the Central African Republic. During the reporting period, 218 security incidents were recorded, including 57 attacks and ambushes targeting United Nations personnel, premises, equipment and convoys attributed to armed groups and criminal gangs. Those incidents resulted in the deaths of four peacekeepers, in Tagbara (Sector Centre, April), Bangui (Sector Bangui, April), Alindao (Sector Centre, May) and Dilapoko (Sector West, June). Four additional peacekeepers died during the reporting period, two in road traffic accidents and two others owing to illness. Furthermore, 18 cases of death threats and harassment of United Nations personnel were reported and attributed to armed and criminal groups, as well as two separate incidents when United Nations personnel were detained, in one case by internal security forces and the second by an armed group. Unknown assailants killed one United Nations

consultant close to Markounda. A total of 82 cases of injured personnel (26 in ambush, 23 in hostile attacks by armed groups and 33 in road traffic accidents) occurred. Thirty demonstrations against the United Nations were held in Bangui and other parts of the country during the period under review. MINUSCA continued to implement the action plan to improve the security of peacekeepers, following the report by Lieutenant General (retired) Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, by projecting a robust posture against threats and improving its capacity to prevent attacks and respond to threats.

IV. Humanitarian situation

35. The Central African Republic remains on the brink of a humanitarian crisis. Throughout the reporting period, clashes between armed groups and attacks on civilians increased humanitarian needs, and several new areas of acute crisis emerged. Since December 2017, the overall number of displaced people has reached unprecedented levels. As at 10 June, 670,000 people remained internally displaced and another 583,000 were refugees in neighbouring countries, an increase in the past year of 70 per cent and 35 per cent, respectively. This amounted to one in every four Central Africans displaced. Areas that saw new or compounding humanitarian needs include Alindao, Amada-Gaza, Markounda, Seko and Tagbara. A total of 973 Central Africans have been assisted in their voluntary repatriation, mainly from Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

36. Acts of violence against humanitarian actors continued to increase, making the Central African Republic one of the deadliest humanitarian contexts in the world and curtailing the effective delivery of assistance. In priority areas such as Kabo and Markounda, aid workers withdrew owing to insecurity. Elsewhere, such as in Bangassou, Batangafo, Kaga Bandoro, Rafai and Zemio, aid organizations that reduced their footprint in 2017 owing to violent attacks were unable to resume full operational capacity. In some areas, the fragmentation of armed groups undermined efforts to negotiate humanitarian access.

37. The outbreak of violence in Bangui resulted in the displacement of an estimated 10,000 people within the city. Hundreds of houses were looted in various neighbourhoods following population displacement, resulting in decreased access to already scarce resources, such as drinking water. Parents are reluctant to send their children to school owing to fear of further violent attacks.

38. Humanitarian underfunding remained a serious and urgent issue. As at 1 June, the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan was funded at less than 16 per cent, leaving a deficit of some $434 million in the response to the needs of 1.9 million people. Lack of funding, along with persistent insecurity, has left some areas without a humanitarian presence or sufficient capacity, as actors are limited to monitoring and providing assistance remotely. From 18 to 22 February, my Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator visited the country to observe how insecurity and violence were affecting the population.

V. Protection of civilians

39. Civilians continued to be the primary target and victims of the ongoing violence. The Mission adopted a new protection of civilians strategy in April and has been implementing many recommendations contained in the report of the independent investigation by Brigadier General (retired) Fernand Marcel Amoussou to ensure greater investment in preventive strategies to protect civilians and more proactive and integrated responses to emerging threats. As part of the strategy, priority attention has been placed on areas of highest risk of threat to civilians.

40. Where robust action has been taken, such as in Bangui, Berberati, Bria and Paoua, risks to the protection of civilians have been identified in advance and mitigating measures taken to ensure a multidimensional response that would address those risks and prevent violence. MINUSCA established new early warning mechanisms to enable a more rapid response so as to better prevent threats to civilians. The expanded recruitment and training of community liaison assistants operating throughout the country, who serve as critical links between MINUSCA and communities in remote areas, contributed to improving the situational awareness of peacekeepers and resulted in strengthened responses and information flows on threats to civilians. However, the Mission's limited capacities and the significant multiplication of hotspots throughout the country have made it increasingly difficult for the Mission to simultaneously respond to all emerging threats.

41. The extension of State authority remains a key factor in protecting civilians from physical harm sustainably over the long term. The Mission provided training on the protection of civilians to 140 national armed forces troops deployed alongside MINUSCA forces, as well as to the newly deployed prefects. In addition, MINUSCA completed 15 explosive ordnance disposal operations to remove explosive hazards, protecting more than 2,500 civilians and ensuring their safe access to education, as well as to economic and social activities.

VI. Extension of State authority and the rule of law

Extension of State authority

42. Since my previous report, some progress has been reported in the extension of State authority. Several ministries, supported by MINUSCA and the United Nations country team, led a mapping to verify the presence and functionality of civil servants with the aim of providing a comprehensive needs analysis for the restoration of State authority and designing deployment schemes that would prioritize the provision of basic social services. The mapping revealed that over 50 per cent of the civil servants deployed before the 2013 crisis have been redeployed. Following the mapping, an interministerial coordination committee was established to provide a framework for mutual coordination, joint decision-making and monitoring on the restoration of State authority at the strategic level.

43. MINUSCA, jointly with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), continued to rehabilitate and equip premises for local authorities and magistrates deployed throughout the country. Their sustainable deployment faced significant challenges as personnel encountered security risks and poor working and living conditions outside Bangui.

Justice and the rule of law

44. During the Bangui criminal court session, 12 of the 32 registered cases were tried, with the support of MINUSCA, UNDP and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, resulting in a sharp increase in the number of cases tried in connection with the crimes committed during the crisis. Judicial authorities, with support from MINUSCA, are also implementing the reforms needed to address the procedural and technical irregularities observed during those trials.

45. The Government has continued to make significant progress towards the operationalization of the Special Criminal Court. Following the appointment on 20 February of 20 judicial police officers and their subsequent training, the National Assembly adopted the rules of procedure and evidence of the Court, which will enable the swift start of the investigations. In a parallel development, on 22 May, the Mission

and UNDP officially handed over to the Government the strategy for the protection of victims and witnesses which will underpin the establishment of a victim and witness protection programme for the Court and other national jurisdictions.

46. The Mission continued to use its urgent temporary measures, apprehending 91 individuals suspected of committing various crimes, including murder, rape, kidnapping, armed robbery, torture and looting, during the reporting period. Among them were two individuals suspected in the murder in December 2017 of a Mauritanian peacekeeper in Bria. In addition, on 15 May, "Pino-Pino", a local anti-balaka leader suspected of involvement in attacks against civilians and peacekeepers in May 2017, was arrested by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Yakoma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, along with over 30 fighters. MINUSCA is working with the Central African authorities to ensure their swift extradition to Bangui.

47. During the reporting period, several prison security incidents occurred, including a large mutiny on 10 April. National civilian and military personnel at Ngaragba prison and its annex at Camp de Roux managed those multiple prison incidents effectively, with the support of the Mission's enhanced mentoring and 24-hour staff presence. In addition to significant overcrowding, resulting in deteriorating infrastructure in Ngaragba and Camp de Roux, the women's prison in Bimbo continues to lack adequate capacity, resources and oversight to ensure safe, secure and humane conditions of imprisonment.

Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation

48. Building on the experience of the pilot project on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the Government, with support from MINUSCA, continued to negotiate bilateral agreements with leaders of armed groups that demonstrated willingness and commitment to fully disarm and demobilize. Since February, several anti-balaka factions in Bouar, as well as the Belanga and Sayo factions of Révolution et justice and Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation, have expressed their willingness to disarm. The Government is actively making arrangements to start the disarmament process with those groups.

49. MINUSCA continues to implement community violence reduction programmes to support the effective implementation of local peace agreements and foster coordination among actors engaged in recovery- and stabilization-related programmes. Those community violence reduction programmes have involved the voluntary disarmament of large numbers of youth involved in gang, militia and armed group activity. In consultation with the United Nations country team, MINUSCA is developing a framework for community violence reduction programming that will allow for an expansion of national and international efforts and an increase in programme volume.

Security sector reform

50. The Government continued to demonstrate strong commitment to implementing the national strategy for security sector reform. It set several milestones critical to the effective redeployment of professional, ethnically representative and regionally balanced national defence and internal security forces. MINUSCA assisted the Ministers of Defence and Justice in disseminating the Military Justice Code, issued in February. A presidential decree of 6 March 2018 authorized the retirement of 829 armed forces personnel, which should pave the way for a new inclusive recruitment campaign and the integration of former combatants from armed groups.

51. In March, the second batch of 500 police and gendarmerie recruits to be deployed in formed units throughout the country started training at the police and gendarmerie schools in Bangui.

52. MINUSCA completed the construction of a weapons and ammunition storage facility in Bouar for the national armed forces.

VII. Human rights and the fight against impunity

53. During the reporting period, MINUSCA documented 1,062 incidents of human rights abuses, violations of international human rights law or violations of international humanitarian law, compared with 1,283 incidents for the previous reporting period. Those incidents affected 1,978 victims, comprising 1,122 men, 252 women, 414 children (297 boys, 97 girls and 20 unknown minors) and 190 unidentified victims. The most frequently documented offences related to killings, destruction of civilian property, cruel and inhumane treatment, conflict-related sexual violence, arbitrary detention, deprivation of liberty, abduction, recruitment of children, attacks against schools and denial of humanitarian access. However, the decrease in the number of documented cases and victims does not represent the reality on the ground, given the increased insecurity in the country, which prevented MINUSCA from undertaking monitoring activities.

54. The violations were committed mainly by ex-Séléka splinter factions (336 documented acts), other organized armed groups and militia, particularly the criminal group called "Force" in the PK5 neighbourhood of Bangui (138 acts), and the anti-balaka associated militias (151 acts). Internal security forces were responsible for 437 violations, including 401 cases of arbitrary detention.

55. MINUSCA, jointly with UNDP, verified 3,254 active personnel in the police and gendarmerie and provided recommendations to the Government, for examination by a verification committee. MINUSCA supported the Government in drafting executive orders to vet 150 national corrections officers. Under the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces, MINUSCA conducted 24 risk assessments and verified 707 members of the internal security forces, which led to the exclusion of two individuals from receiving United Nations support.

Transitional justice

56. The Government took a significant step towards the operationalization of the planned truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation commission by appointing 25 members of the steering committee to propose draft legislation defining the mandate of the commission. MINUSCA is represented on the steering committee and will seek to ensure that the approaches of national authorities to transitional justice contribute to the peaceful end of armed conflict and remain in line with relevant United Nations standards.

Conflict-related sexual violence

57. MINUSCA documented 39 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence affecting 61 victims (43 women, 17 girls and 1 boy), compared with 86 during the previous period. The violations committed were rape (31), forced marriage (4), attempted rape (3) and sexual assault (1). The perpetrators include armed Fulani elements (13), as well as elements from UPC (20), MPC (6), anti-balaka (4), MNLC (2), the FPRC/MPC coalition (3), Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3), unspecified ex-Séléka groups (3), internal security forces (3) and the FPRC

Abdoulaye Hissène faction (1). Accountability for cases related to such violence remains a major challenge, owing to serious capacity and infrastructure limitations. MINUSCA is working closely with the Government through its Joint Rapid Response and Prevention Unit for Sexual Violence against Women and Children to address a number of sexual and gender-based violence cases, including conflict-related sexual violence cases documented by the Mission. In addition, to strengthen national coordination and capacities for the protection of survivors and witnesses, MINUSCA is coordinating the establishment of a national and multifunctional network for the protection of victims.

Children and armed conflict

58. The country task force engaged MPC leaders in Kaga Bandoro and representatives from UPC and FPRC in Bangui and Ndélé, respectively, where all three factions reiterated their commitment to implementing demobilization action plans for children. UPC in Mboki and anti-balaka groups in Kaga Bandoro presented two lists of 48 children in total, reportedly associated with both groups. FPRC in Bria submitted a list of 173 children, while ex-Séléka groups in Kaga Bandoro presented a list of 16 children. Preparations are under way to verify and separate those associated with the said groups.

VIII. Socioeconomic situation

59. The gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate forecast for 2018 held steady at 5 per cent, compared with an increase of 4 per cent in 2017. The 2018 national budget targeted a domestic revenue-to-GDP ratio of 9.6 per cent, a primary spending-to-GDP ratio of 9.7 per cent and domestically financed capital expenditure at 1.3 per cent of GDP. Social spending was anticipated to reach 1.1 per cent as a share of GDP. Insecurity remained the main impediment to steady economic growth, particularly affecting the management of natural resources.

Implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan and the Mutual Engagement Framework

60. The process of implementing the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan remains slow, with a delivery rate of 18 per cent. The United Nations developed a strategy, agreed to by partners, to address multiple challenges and accelerate the disbursement of funds. On the occasion of the two-year anniversary of the inauguration of Mr. Touadera, the Government and international partners launched 21 projects targeting basic social services, amounting to $161 million.

IX. Mission capacities

A. Military

61. Following the deployment to MINUSCA in May of an infantry battalion from Rwanda with 400 soldiers, as at 1 June, MINUSCA had deployed 11,014 military personnel (3.28 per cent of whom were women), representing 94.54 per cent of the total authorized strength of 11,650 soldiers. It comprised 10 infantry battalions, a special forces company, a quick-reaction force company, a reserve battalion and several enabling units, including a military police company, four engineering companies, a heavy transport company, three level II hospitals, a signal company and three helicopter units, including a combat helicopter unit. A fifth engineering company of 128 soldiers from Pakistan will increase MINUSCA strength to 11,142

military personnel around 25 June, while 600 soldiers from Nepal will be deployed starting in June until September, at which point the MINUSCA force will be at 95.6 per cent of its total authorized strength. The fielding of Orbiter 2/3 drones and new Phantom 4 drones strengthened MINUSCA surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, providing needed early warning capability, as well as improved situational awareness.

B. Police

62. As at 1 June, MINUSCA had deployed 2,030 police personnel, 98 per cent of the authorized strength of 2,080. A total of 376 individual police officers, including 54 women, were deployed, representing 94 per cent of the authorized strength of 400. Ten formed police units and two protection support units comprising 1,654 officers, including 111 women, were deployed, representing 98 per cent of the authorized strength of 1,680. Outside Bangui, 110 individual police officers were deployed in 12 sites, while four formed police units were in Bambari, Bouar, Bria and Kaga Bandoro. In April, formed police units were temporarily deployed to Bangassou: 70 personnel from Bangui for three months and 54 additional officers from Bambari for one month.

C. Civilian personnel

63. As at 1 June, MINUSCA had deployed 1,398 civilian personnel, representing 80 per cent of a total of 1,747 authorized positions. This includes 609 international staff, 520 national staff and 232 United Nations Volunteers. Women constituted 25 per cent of civilian personnel overall, with 22 per cent in positions at the P-5 level or above. The recruitment and retention of women personnel continue to be a priority.

D. Status-of-forces agreement

64. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a number of outstanding issues pertaining to the status-of-forces agreement were resolved, including an unjustified request by the Société centrafricaine de télécommunications for rent payment for a site allocated to MINUSCA by the Government and the extension of the Bossangoa airport. On 7 March, the Mission received a report from the Director General of Customs alleging two cases of abuse by Ecolog, a contractor that MINUSCA employs for life-support services, of the privileges and immunities of the Mission, leading customs authorities to refuse to process tax exemption documents and block MINUSCA from importing essential food items for its personnel. The import documents were processed on 31 March, following numerous démarches by MINUSCA. One of the two incidents alleged by the Director General of Customs is being investigated by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, and material facts concerning the second case remain to be provided by the national authorities.

E. Efforts to optimize performance

65. The Mission continued its efforts to improve performance across all components, including through the mechanism of a joint operational planning team, which defines strategic priorities for each field office, including measuring progress on key Mission objectives in line with its mandate. The team oversees and coordinates operational coordination teams at the field level, which in turn develop detailed plans and specific operations to achieve the strategic priorities set by the joint team for their respective field offices. Such efforts helped the Mission to improve its overall

operational coordination and information sharing, integrating the growing range of information collection systems used by the Mission.

66. MINUSCA created a joint task force with relevant components to coordinate and monitor progress in implementing recommendations in the report of the independent investigation by Brigadier General (retired) Amoussou to improve the Mission's response to the protection of civilians, as well as the action plan to reduce peacekeeper fatalities following the report by Lieutenant General (retired) dos Santos Cruz, in close collaboration with United Nations Headquarters.

67. Five new allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse against MINUSCA forces were recorded, compared with two allegations during the previous reporting period. The allegations are pending investigation by the relevant troop-contributing countries and the United Nations.

68. MINUSCA continued to take all measures necessary to ensure its full compliance with my zero-tolerance policy. The Mission also implemented strict non-fraternization policies and undertook targeted and frequent training for United Nations personnel, awareness-raising activities for the host population, joint patrols and risk assessment visits.

69. MINUSCA and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse work with local authorities and civil society organizations to receive complaints and allegations. MINUSCA trained and equipped over 170 new members of community-based complaints mechanisms in eight high-risk locations. The sensitization of Mission personnel to the new standard operating procedures on reporting and handling misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, has improved existing internal reporting mechanisms and increased effectiveness in recording and responding to misconduct. MINUSCA, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund, referred, for appropriate assistance, five victims, three of whom were victims of newly reported allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.

X. Observations

70. I welcome the progress made so far in the political process under the leadership of Mr. Touadera with the conclusion of the second round of consultations of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation. I am seriously concerned, however, that the first half of 2018 has seen repeated surges of violence targeting civilians, humanitarian workers and peacekeepers, which have resulted in an unacceptable number of deaths, injury and displacement. Innocent lives are being callously lost and the country's progress towards stability and economic recovery impeded.

71. I am appalled that, five years since the start of the crisis in the Central African Republic, intercommunal violence continues to take a heavy toll on civilians around the country. The revenge character of the killings, coupled with the systemic burning and destruction of religious symbols such as mosques and churches, is profoundly troubling. Equally troubling are the fierce resource-driven competition among armed groups, criminal violence and the manipulation of religious and ethnic identity for political or opportunistic gains, which is fuelling the violence. The upsurge in violence in Bangui is particularly concerning, as is the increasingly threatening posture of some armed groups towards the capital, fuelling rumours and insecurity. This must stop now, so that there is a prospect for meaningful dialogue and political progress. I strongly condemn any violence and call for swift investigations and an end to impunity. I would also recall that attacks against United Nations peacekeepers may

constitute a war crime and urge the Central African Republic authorities to investigate them and swiftly bring those responsible to justice. I welcome the efforts by the Government and local communities, including in Bangui, to further enhance security measures, curb criminality and support reconciliation mechanisms to better prevent threats against civilians and the stability of the capital.

72. I further call upon the Government, political and religious leaders and civil society organizations to take coordinated public action to counter this dangerous trend and prevent incitement to violence, including on religious and ethnic grounds. I would further recall that individuals and entities who incite intercommunal violence or provide support for acts that undermine the peace, stability or security of the Central African Republic could be sanctioned by the Security Council and face judicial proceedings. I welcome the recent statement issued by the High Council for Communication to condemn hate speech and stigmatization, including its most recent decisions holding those responsible accountable. However, more needs to be done to mobilize State judicial and security institutions to undertake concrete measures to implement the High Council's decisions.

73. I am nevertheless still optimistic about the path to peace for Central Africans and see opportunities to continue making incremental progress. I commend the role played by the panel of facilitators of the African Initiative in promoting dialogue and addressing the root causes of the enduring instability and armed violence in the Central African Republic. I call upon all armed groups to cease unconditionally all hostilities and to refrain from making any threat to resort to military means. This is incompatible with their commitment to peaceful dialogue and should not be accepted. I encourage the panel and the Government to examine the legitimate grievances communicated by the armed groups collectively, as well as to ensure that an inclusive dialogue with all segments of society delivers peace dividends. This will help to ensure national ownership and the buy-in of all the stakeholders, which is critical to the sustainability of any process. MINUSCA will continue to support the work of the panel and to promote local agreements with national civilian and security authorities to create a more conducive environment for dialogue with the armed groups and facilitate a more rapid path to their disarmament and integration. Such local agreements between armed groups and non-military incentives to leave the path of violence, through the Government's disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and community violence reduction programmes, remain essential. MINUSCA will continue to offer its support. These efforts are particularly important to reducing the recruitment of youth into armed groups or local militias, a major source of instability.

74. I also urge the panel to link its dialogue with armed groups to measures to ensure more consistent and coherent support for stabilization in the Central African Republic from States in the region. The reactivation of the three bilateral joint commissions between the Central African Republic and Cameroon, Chad and the Sudan is an essential step in the right direction. I call upon all Governments to seize this opportunity resolutely. The revival of the commissions, dormant since before the crisis, could potentially play a stronger role in reducing transhumance-related violence, controlling the movement of armed groups, addressing the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons and transnational crime, spurring mutually beneficial economic exchange and facilitating the voluntary return of refugees. I call upon the leaders of the region to rally around an agenda for peace, which will help to stabilize the Central African Republic, while addressing common cross-border threats and enhancing stability in the region as a whole.

75. This will not be possible if Central Africans themselves do not rekindle their resolve to live together in peace in a secular State, proud of their rich history and diversity as a multi-ethnic and multireligious society in the heart of Africa. Genuine

efforts to promote national reconciliation and social cohesion are vital. I welcome Mr. Touadera's leadership role and his decision to establish a steering committee to draft the legal framework for the establishment of a future truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation commission. This will help to ensure that the need for accountability for past crimes and the restoration of durable peace is met. I encourage the Government to start working on the definition of a coherent multidimensional and victim-centred national transitional justice strategy, one based on wide consultation with the meaningful participation of civil society and key stakeholders, in particular victims, and linked to the peace process.

76. There can be no peace without justice and no justice if impunity prevails. Ending impunity in the Central African Republic for grave crimes and human rights violations against civilians, as well as attacks against humanitarian workers and peacekeepers, is essential to reversing the cycle of violence. I am encouraged by the arrest of some of the alleged perpetrators of these attacks and call upon the national authorities to continue to build their capacities to detain, swiftly investigate, prosecute and try these individuals in cooperation with MINUSCA. I particularly welcome the cooperation of the national authorities with MINUSCA in the investigation and prosecution of those who allegedly targeted and killed peacekeepers. To this end, I commend the cooperation between the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in pursuing justice through the extradition of such individuals who had fled into the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Likewise, progress in the establishment and operationalization of national judicial institutions, the Special Criminal Court and a national human rights commission are critical steps in the right direction. I welcome the adoption by the National Assembly of the rules of procedure and evidence of the Court and look forward to the start of the investigations by the Court. Adequate resources will be required to ensure the sustainability of these important institutions.

77. I remain deeply troubled by the humanitarian situation. Funding shortfalls and insecurity hamper the delivery of aid, leaving many people without assistance. The recurrent violence in many parts of the country continues to drive people from their homes and livelihoods. The denial of the right of return for many refugees and internally displaced persons is emblematic of continued intercommunal tensions, obstructing progress and threatening the country's future. I call for greater international support for humanitarian efforts in the country, along with stronger and more effective measures to hold accountable those who attack humanitarian workers. I am confident that the enhanced presence of the State, and relative stability in many areas, together with a robust response to intercommunal violence and its incitement, will enable an accelerated safe and dignified return of those driven from their homes.

78. The persistent weakness of State authority, the flourishing of violence and the continued activity of armed groups are deeply linked, with violence seriously challenging the country's newly established democratic institutions. The presence of the State plays an important role in maintaining stability and establishing a more protective environment. Helping the country to emerge from cycles of chronic violence requires a long-term and multidisciplinary approach, as outlined in the country's National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan and the Mutual Engagement Framework, which offer a clear pathway towards sustainable peace and stability. Renewed commitment to the rapid and effective implementation of the nationally owned strategy is paramount, and I am encouraged that Mr. Touadera has relaunched numerous development projects in line with the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan and urge the Government to accelerate their implementation. I call upon the international community to continue to support the Government's efforts to reinforce local administration throughout the country, emphasizing measures that will accelerate the provision of basic services and the deployment of judicial systems. This

will require measures to address growing fiscal pressures and budgetary shortfalls. Advancing fiscal reforms and creating a conducive business environment to promote the private sector and job creation, and to offer viable alternatives to crime and violence to the population, will remain vital. This progress towards economic recovery will ultimately be critical to maintaining faith in State institutions and ensuring a rapid exit from the humanitarian crisis. Stronger synergies between the Government and its partners will be required, as is close collaboration among the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and States in the region. Our unity of purpose and shared vision in support of efforts to restore State authority must be underpinned by an inclusive dialogue process for a peaceful settlement of conflict and national reconciliation under the overall framework of the African Initiative.

79. I commend the efforts of the Central African authorities to prepare for the progressive redeployment of armed forces trained by the European Union Military Training Mission, as well as accompanying internal security forces. If undertaken properly, such redeployment could enable the Government to progressively assume its sovereign responsibilities and lay the groundwork for the gradual exit of MINUSCA. The recommendations on support for these forces, contained in my letter to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/463), could facilitate this aim.

80. I reiterate that MINUSCA alone cannot and should not carry the burden for this support. This is a responsibility, first and foremost, of national authorities, with the collective support of the international community. I therefore call upon national authorities to deliver progressively and in a timely manner on their commitments in the national security sector and national defence plans. I particularly urge the authorities to rapidly take steps to build armed, internal security forces that are regionally and ethnically diverse, through inclusive recruitment and the integration of former members of armed groups. The forces will also have to receive appropriate and reliable budgetary support and to uphold the principles of accountability and the rule of law so as to establish trust and develop the confidence of local communities. MINUSCA will continue to apply the human rights due diligence policy to ensure oversight of and accountability for the conduct of the national security forces. This initiative requires cohesive international support, and I welcome the continued engagement of the European Union and bilateral donors. I also encourage Member States to provide greater financial, technical and material support for the immediate and long-term deployment of the national security forces, in addition to their assistance to overall security sector reform. It will be critical that international assistance remain well coordinated, coherent, transparent and sustained to succeed.

81. I strongly condemn the unacceptable manipulation of public sentiment against the Mission for short-term, narrow-minded political or resource gains, which also encourages attacks against peacekeepers. I am convinced that the situation in the Central African Republic would have been far worse without MINUSCA; the loss of lives, attacks against civilians and displacement would have been far greater if MINUSCA had not been present. There have been reversals in the pursuit of peace and stability, but the country continues to move forward, and MINUSCA will continue its efforts to improve in the context of my Action for Peacekeeping initiative. I welcome the Mission's laudable efforts to optimize its performance and improve accountability, including for sexual exploitation and abuse. MINUSCA has started addressing gaps and implementing recommendations to further improve the protection of civilians and the security of peacekeepers. The upcoming independent strategic review of MINUSCA will be an opportunity to further examine the Mission.

82. I am grateful to my Special Representative, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, for his dedication and leadership. I deeply appreciate the devotion to the cause of peace of the personnel of MINUSCA, the United Nations country team and the troop- and police-contributing countries, particularly in a highly challenging environment. I am

also grateful to my Special Representative for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Office for Central Africa, François Louncény Fall, for his role in the subregion in support of the Central African Republic. I thank the African Union, ECCAS, the European Union, the World Bank and bilateral and international partners, including the International Support Group and non-governmental organizations, for their continued efforts to work with the Government and all Central Africans towards a peaceful and stable Central African Republic.

Map No. 4522 Rev. 12 UNITED NATIONS
June 2018 (Colour)

Department of Field Support
Geospatial Information Section (formerly Cartographic Section)

United Nations S/2018/612

Security Council

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Letter dated 13 June 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

By its resolution 2363 (2017), the Security Council extended the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) until 30 June 2018 and requested me to report every 60 days on its implementation. Pending forthcoming deliberations in the Council on the renewal of the UNAMID mandate, and consultations on the special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the strategic review of UNAMID (S/2018/530), in lieu of the 60-day report, I have the honour to submit an update on the main developments relevant to the implementation of the UNAMID mandate from 16 April to 10 June 2018 (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

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Annex

Update on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (16 April–10 June 2018)

I. Introduction

1. The present note provides a brief update on major developments since the publication of the previous report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), dated 25 April 2018 (S/2018/389). It focuses on the clashes in the Jebel Marra area between the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW) and the Sudanese Armed Forces, and between SLA-AW and nomadic communities, which have reportedly resulted in the displacement of civilians from the Jebel Marra area. As during the previous reporting period, the level of intercommunal violence remained low, with a marginal increase in the number of incidents, while attacks on camps for internally displaced persons and reported forced evictions from those camps created anxiety and insecurity among the internally displaced population. Efforts to break the stalemate in the Darfur peace process continued, with several significant political developments taking place during the reporting period.

II. Fighting in the Jebel Marra area

2. Intermittent clashes in the Jebel Marra area between SLA-AW and government security forces continued, with government forces putting pressure on SLA-AW strongholds and aiming to weaken its presence. Proactive attacks by SLA-AW during the reporting period were largely limited to ambushes, likely in an attempt to impede the advance of security forces. On 19 April, SLA-AW elements ambushed a Sudanese Armed Forces convoy in the Tarantara area in southern Jebel Marra, killing three Sudanese Armed Forces personnel. From 19 to 21 April, SLA-AW positions were reportedly attacked by militias supported by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) around Boulay in northern Jebel Marra, with an unconfirmed number of villages being burned down. While attempting to reach the SLA-AW stronghold in Kibli, Sudanese Armed Forces clashed with the rebel group on 1 May in Katti and on 24 May in Manubu, in Central Darfur. On 11 May, SLA-AW again ambushed a convoy of the Sudanese Armed Forces and RSF near Tarantara and Kara, in South Darfur, with reports of 17 government soldiers being injured and villages being burned down. On 13 May, government forces carried out an operation against SLA-AW in Gubbo, Kawara and Kimintunge, in South Darfur, during which villages were burned down and civilians were displaced. From 22 to 24 May, government forces reportedly attacked SLA-AW positions in Tarantara, Gur Lambung, Kara, Kawara and Saboon El Fag, in South Darfur, and in Rockero, in North Darfur, causing displacement. Unconfirmed reports were received of government airstrikes in Gubbo, Kawara, Sabun El Fagor and Gur Lambung, in South Darfur, causing civilian casualties. There were reports of fighting taking place on 27 May in Buju Buju and Gubbo, in South Darfur.

3. UNAMID faced difficulties in monitoring, verifying and reporting incidents, including human rights violations, owing to access restrictions imposed by the Government. During the reporting period, UNAMID was denied access four times for verification missions to Tarantara, and once for a mission to Feina, both in South Darfur.

4. Since humanitarian actors were also denied access to many areas, it remains difficult to gauge the scope of displacement emanating from the clashes. Humanitarian actors were able to verify that 3,055 individuals had been displaced

from the eastern Jebel Marra area, in South Darfur, in addition to unverified reports of another 4,210 displaced persons. An inter-agency assessment undertaken from 25 to 29 April identified 11,425 individuals displaced in Rockero and Gemeza, in the northern Jebel Marra area, in Central Darfur. By mid-May, those displaced individuals were reported to have returned to their places of origin. About 1,750 people were reportedly displaced to Sortony, in North Darfur. Credible reports from two camps for internally displaced persons indicate that grave violations, including killing and maiming, sexual violence, abductions and attacks on schools, were committed against children by RSF and militias during the clashes between government forces and SLA-AW in the eastern Jebel Marra area.

III. Internally displaced persons

5. Attacks on the Khamsa Dagayeg, Ardayba and Jedda camps for internally displaced persons in Central Darfur, which took place from 21 to 23 May, resulted in a number of fatalities and injuries among internally displaced persons. On 21 May, a woman was reportedly injured in a confrontation between internally displaced persons and RSF in the Khamsa Dagayeg camp. In response, hundreds of internally displaced persons demonstrated in Zalingei, leading to another confrontation with government forces in which 15 protesters were injured, including two women and three minors. Over the following two days, fighting between internally displaced persons and Nawa'ibah tribesmen in the Ardayba camp reportedly left five internally displaced persons dead and 28 injured. During the same period, clashes between Nawa'ibah tribesmen and internally displaced persons also occurred in the Jedda camp, which reportedly left 2 dead and 8 injured.

6. There was anxiety among internally displaced persons over various statements made by government officials on possible forced evictions from camps for internally displaced persons. In Kass, in South Darfur, internally displaced persons complained about their forced eviction from public lands and buildings, as well as threats and assaults perpetrated by RSF aimed at persuading internally displaced persons to leave the sites. Local government authorities denied that any eviction order had been issued and stated instead that the relocations had been agreed upon by the internally displaced persons in exchange for land, with a total of 3,500 plots having been identified. However, leaders of those internally displaced persons maintained that any return or relocation must be undertaken on a fully voluntary basis and not infringe upon their right to choose to remain in the camps or to return to their villages of origin.

IV. Other conflict-related issues

7. Tensions over land ownership and use persist across Darfur, in particular as internally displaced persons attempt to return to their original homes. A total of 26 incidents of harassment and denial of access to land were recorded during the reporting period. The most serious of those occurred on 4 June, when nine internally displaced persons were reportedly shot and killed in Hijaartono, in South Darfur, after returning to their original homes.

8. The level of intercommunal violence remained low, with only a marginal increase in the number of incidents. Six intercommunal clashes over land disputes and livestock theft resulted in nine fatalities. On 3 May, fighting over land ownership occurred between Fallata and Misseriya tribesmen in Abu Jabrah and resulted in the death of one Misseriya tribesmen and the displacement of an unknown number to areas around Graida. Clashes between Fallata and Masalit farmers occurred on

27 May in Abdoze, north-west of Graida, with one farmer killed and four others injured.

V. Peace process

9. Representatives of the Government of the Sudan and of the non-signatory Darfur armed movements met in Berlin on 16 and 17 April to discuss a pre-negotiation framework. The African Union-United Nations Joint Special Representative for Darfur and representatives of the troika countries (Norway, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America) attended the meeting. Although the parties agreed on all other elements of the proposed pre-negotiation framework, they could not reach consensus on the issue of the timing for the creation of new and independent implementation mechanisms for any subsequent peace agreement. The non-signatory movements insisted on agreeing on the establishment of new implementation arrangements before negotiations, while the Government maintained that implementation modalities could only be discussed once an agreement had been reached on the substantive issues. Notwithstanding the failure to agree on that issue, the parties reaffirmed their commitment to a negotiated settlement, and for the first time, the Darfur armed movements accepted, in principle, the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur as the basis for future negotiations.

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Seventy-second session
Agenda item 44
Question of Cyprus

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Letter dated 8 June 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 6 June 2018 (see annex), addressed to you by the Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Mehmet Dânâ.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex were to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 44, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feridun H. **Sinirlioğlu**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 8 June 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

6 June 2018

Upon instructions from my Government, I am writing in response to the statements made by the Greek Cypriot Representative in New York during the Security Council open debate entitled "Upholding international law within the context of the maintenance of international peace and security", held on 17 May 2018, which contain unfounded allegations.

It should be underlined, at the outset, that the partnership Republic of 1960, which the Greek Cypriot representative purportedly represents, was destroyed by the Greek Cypriot partner in December 1963, following the attacks on the Turkish Cypriot people and the forceful expulsion of the Turkish Cypriot elements from all state organs, denying them fundamental human rights. As you are well aware, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus was deployed against this background. Since then, there has been no single constitutional government representing both peoples of Cyprus or the island as a whole. Each side has since ruled itself, while the Greek Cypriot side has continued to claim that it is the "Government of Cyprus".

The said statements of the Greek Cypriot representative which claim that Turkey violated international law and thus led to the Cyprus problem are far from the truth, as the rightful intervention by Turkey in 1974 was fully legitimate under international law in accordance with Turkey's rights and obligations emanating from the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee. As a result, the Turkish Cypriots were saved from total annihilation and the island's annexation to Greece (enosis) was prevented. In fact, it was the ethnic cleansing campaign instigated by the Greek Cypriots with the ultimate goal of achieving enosis that triggered the Cyprus issue. Hence, the rightful intervention of Turkey was a reaction to, not the cause of, the Cyprus problem. Furthermore, it has to be noted in this regard that none of the Security Council resolutions on Cyprus refer to the presence of the Turkish troops on the island as an "occupation".

As for the issue of the natural resources and wealth around the island, it should be noted that the Turkish Cypriots, as the equal co-owners of the island, are consequently the equal co-owners of the natural resources around the island ab initio ipso facto. In this regard, the consent of both sides has to be sought regarding the exploration, exploitation and marketing of these resources, given that the Turkish Cypriot side has equal and inalienable rights over them. Hence, it is unacceptable for the Turkish Cypriot side to be left out of the energy equation.

In this respect, the oft-repeated Turkish Cypriot proposals for cooperation with a view to equitably managing every aspect of the energy issue or postponing any activity to a time following a political settlement should not be overlooked. Unfortunately, however, it is evident that the Greek Cypriot side has opted for a persistent policy of taking unilateral actions in this matter. Within this context, it should be noted that the activities falsely claimed by the Greek Cypriot representative as acts of aggression and "gunboat diplomacy" in the Eastern Mediterranean are in fact reciprocal actions taken on behalf of the Turkish Cypriot side, the equal co-owner, as a response to the unilateral actions taken by the Greek Cypriot side.

In view of the above, it is clear that the said statements of the Greek Cypriot representative are yet another unfortunate reminder that the Turkish Cypriot people are deprived of their right to be heard at international platforms where the Greek Cypriot representatives regularly exploit their absence to put forward unsubstantiated allegations.

Availing myself of the present opportunity, I would like to call upon the Greek Cypriot side to discontinue such counterproductive and outdated rhetoric, particularly at a time when, in line with your call, the two sides in Cyprus are still engaged in a period of reflection on the reasons behind the failure of 50 years of negotiations to reach a just and viable settlement to the long-standing Cyprus issue. In this regard, the attempts of the Greek Cypriot side to create a fait accompli in the region is to the detriment of both this reflection period and the overall spirit of partnership and equality on matters of mutual interest.

I should be grateful if the present letter would be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 44, and of the Security Council.

Mehmet **Dânâ**
Representative

United Nations S/2018/614

Security Council

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Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the sixth quarterly report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). It provides a review and an assessment of the implementation of the resolution since my previous report on the subject, which was delivered orally on 26 March 2018, and covers developments until 12 June 2018.

II. Settlement activities

2. In its resolution 2334 (2016), the Security Council reaffirmed that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, had no legal validity and constituted a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. The Council reiterated its demands that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and that it fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard. No such steps were taken during the reporting period.

3. During the reporting period, some 3,500 housing units in settlements in Area C of the occupied West Bank were advanced, approved or tendered. One third of those units are in settlements in outlying locations deep in the West Bank. Plans for 2,300 units were advanced in the approval process, plans for 300 units reached the final approval stage, and tenders were announced for about 900 units. During the previous reporting period, 1,500 units were advanced, 160 approved and 900 tenders issued. As in the previous period, no advancements, approvals or tenders were made in occupied East Jerusalem. Among the largest plans advanced for settlements deep in the West Bank are those for 135 units in Tene, 156 in Qiryat Arba', 189 in Talmon and 102 in Negohot. One of the plans approved for construction is for 55 units in the settlement of Peza'el, situated in the Jordan Valley, in a sensitive location where settlement expansion risks severing the north-south connection in the northern West Bank.

4. On 26 March, 20 settler families occupied two houses located a few metres from the Ibrahimi Mosque/Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron's H2 area, claiming that they

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had purchased the houses from their Palestinian owners. Ownership is currently being adjudicated by Israeli military authorities.

5. On 13 May, the Government of Israel approved five plans for government investment in Jerusalem, the largest amounting to $550 million and aimed at closing gaps in infrastructure, service delivery and employment opportunities for the Palestinian neighbourhoods of occupied East Jerusalem.

6. The plans also include allocating $115 million for the development of economic, commercial and recreational activities, as well as archaeological sites in and around the Old City. Approximately $55 million was allocated to advance the controversial plan to build a cable car from West Jerusalem to the Old City. Concerns have been raised among Palestinians in East Jerusalem that those planned steps could deepen control by Israel over Jerusalem.

7. Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures continued across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, albeit at the relatively low rate that characterized the past year. Demolitions increased overall across Area C by 94 per cent and decreased in East Jerusalem by 64 per cent, compared with the previous reporting period. Citing the absence of permits, which, as noted in the Middle East Quartet report of 2016, are extremely difficult for Palestinians to obtain in Area C and East Jerusalem, Israeli authorities demolished or seized 84 Palestinian-owned structures. This resulted in the forced displacement of 67 people and potentially affected the livelihoods of 4,500 others.

8. A new order by the Israel Defense Forces stipulates, as of 16 June, the demolition of unlicensed structures that are deemed "new" (i.e. established within 6 months or inhabited for less than 30 days) within 96 hours of the issuance of a removal order. That procedure will significantly impede the ability of Palestinians to challenge demolition orders in Israeli courts.

9. On 24 May, the High Court of Justice of Israel ruled that the demolition of Khan al-Ahmar — Abu al-Helu, home to 181 Palestinians, more than half of whom are children, could proceed. It renders nearly all community structures at risk of immediate demolition, including a school serving 170 students from five communities. Focusing on the legality of the demolition orders according to Israeli law, the High Court rejected the petitions requesting that the implementation of the demolition order by the State be prevented.

10. On 23 April, residents of the Bedouin community of Jabal al-Baba were forced to dismantle a caravan used as a kindergarten, a women's centre and a clinic, following a seizure warning from the Israeli authorities. Jabal al-Baba is one of 18 Bedouin communities, comprising more than 3,500 persons located within or near the E1 settlement plan area, which envisages a continuous built-up area between Ma'ale Adummim and East Jerusalem that threatens the north-south contiguity of a future Palestinian State.

11. On 9 April, the Israeli authorities dismantled a donor-funded school in Khirbat Zanuta, in Hebron Governorate, subsequently seizing replacement structures. Also in Hebron, on 2 May several donor-funded structures in Masafer Yatta were demolished, displacing 35 people. This included six residential structures, electricity-generating equipment, animal pens and water systems. Four solar panels were also confiscated.

12. In the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, on 8 April, Palestinian families in three houses were evicted by court order. Although the families obtained an injunction to suspend the eviction orders, they were not allowed to return to their homes.

13. On 12 June, the Israeli authorities evacuated and demolished 15 houses of Israeli citizens living in the illegal outpost of Netiv Ha'avot in the West Bank. The evacuation was carried out following a ruling by the High Court of Justice in September 2016 that the houses were illegally built, either fully or partially, on private Palestinian land.

III. Violence against civilians, including acts of terror

14. In its resolution 2334 (2016), the Security Council called for immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction, and called for accountability in this regard. However, the reporting period was characterized by high levels of violence and rocket attacks from Gaza.

15. During the reporting period, 135 Palestinians, including 16 children, were shot and killed by the Israel Defense Forces in Gaza, 118 of them during the "Great Return March" protests, 68 on 14 May alone, the peak of the protests. Hamas and Islamic Jihad have publicly acknowledged that a number of their members were among those killed in the protests and other incidents. Based on local estimates, during the protests, 3,778 Palestinians were wounded by live ammunition, resulting in scores of life-altering injuries. Two Israeli soldiers were injured during the protests.

16. Since the beginning of the protests, 54 health workers were injured and 45 ambulances affected. On 1 June, Razan al-Najjar, a 21-year-old Palestinian woman volunteering as a first responder, was shot and killed. She was one of two medical workers killed during the protests. According to eyewitness reports, Al-Najjar was dressed in clothing clearly distinguishing her as a health-care worker and was attempting to reach injured protesters when she was shot. The Israel Defense Forces opened an internal investigation and, on 5 June, released initial findings indicating that "no shots were deliberately or directly" aimed at Al-Najjar.

17. Public statements and messages by Hamas leaders indicated the intention to use mass protests to infiltrate Israel and seek martyrdom. Among the thousands of peaceful demonstrators, hundreds approached and attempted to breach the fence, burned tyres, threw rocks and firebombs at Israeli forces, launched incendiary kites and laid improvised explosive devices, at least two of which exploded at or near the perimeter fence. According to the Israeli authorities, incendiary kites have caused large fires that burned thousands of acres of agricultural fields and nature reserves, resulting in damage estimated at more than $2 million. On three occasions, Palestinian protesters attacked the Kerem Shalom crossing and severely damaged infrastructure on the Palestinian side (see sect. V).

18. After discovering an improvised explosive device adjacent to the fence on 27 May and reportedly coming under fire while arresting two Palestinians who crossed into Israel on 28 May, the Israel Defense Forces killed three Palestinian Islamic Jihad militants and a Hamas militant. During the night of 28 May, machine gun fire from Gaza hit the Israeli city of Sderot, causing damage to several buildings and a vehicle.

19. On 29 May, reportedly in response to the deaths in Gaza, nearly 200 rockets and mortar rounds were fired from the Gaza Strip towards Israel, the largest wave of projectiles fired from Gaza since the conclusion of the previous round of fighting in Gaza in 2014. The majority of the projectiles were intercepted by Iron Dome, while one mortar reportedly landed in the grounds of a kindergarten in a kibbutz in the Eshkol Regional Council, causing no injuries. Three Israeli soldiers and two civilians were reportedly injured in other incidents in Israeli communities bordering Gaza. In

response, the Israel Defense Forces retaliated by striking 65 targets throughout the Gaza Strip that it attributed to Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas. No casualties were reported from those retaliatory strikes.

20. Hamas and the Islamic Jihad claimed joint responsibility for the rockets and mortars fired at Israel. The escalation ended on 30 May, although on 2 June militants in Gaza fired at least four additional projectiles towards Israel. In response, the Israel Defense Forces said that they had retaliated by firing on 15 militant sites throughout the Gaza Strip. No casualties were reported.

21. Overall, since 26 March more than 250 rockets and mortar shells were fired from Gaza towards Israel, a tenfold increase compared with the previous reporting period. The Israeli Air Force targeted facilities that it attributed to Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad on 120 occasions, causing extensive damage, killing two Palestinian militants and injuring another militant and one civilian. On 27 May, the Israel Defense Forces indicated that they had located an unmanned aerial vehicle armed with explosives, sent from Gaza towards the Sha'ar Hanegev Regional Council.

22. During the reporting period, Israel announced the destruction of three tunnels from Gaza, including a 2 km tunnel leading from Gaza and entering Israel and Egypt.

23. In the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, regular clashes between Palestinians and the Israel Defense Forces continued throughout the reporting period. On 23 May 2018, a Palestinian teenager died of gunshot wounds sustained from Israeli security forces during protests. On 26 May, an Israeli soldier died after being critically wounded on 24 May by a Palestinian during an arrest operation in the Am'ari refugee camp in Ramallah. On 6 June, a Palestinian youth was shot dead by the Israel Defense Forces during protest-related clashes in the village of Nabi Salih, north-west of Ramallah.

24. Since 10 June, thousands of Palestinians have demonstrated in Ramallah in solidarity with Gaza against the restrictive measures imposed by the Government of the State of Palestine on the Strip. Demonstrators also demanded an end to the political division and the closures in Gaza.

25. On 11 June, an 18-year-old Israeli woman was seriously injured in a stabbing attack in the city of Afula, in northern Israel. The Israeli authorities arrested a Palestinian from Janin on suspicion of carrying out the attack.

26. During the reporting period, 48 incidents of Israeli settler-related violence were documented and resulted in 14 Palestinian injured casualties and damage to property. There were 29 Palestinian attacks against Israeli civilians in the West Bank, also resulting in casualties or damage. Both represent a decline compared with the previous period, during which there were 61 and 45 attacks, respectively.

27. The highest number of incidents of violence perpetrated by settlers occurred in the Yitzhar settlement and its adjacent outposts and affected at least 20,000 Palestinians in five communities in the Nablus Governorate. The Israel Defense Forces have reportedly deployed additional forces in the area to prevent further incidents.

28. On 19 April, an Israeli civilian was lightly wounded in occupied East Jerusalem by a molotov cocktail, while on 22 May a vehicle driven by an Israeli was hit by gun shots near the Talmon settlement, causing no injuries. Two Palestinians were reportedly arrested in connection with the attack.

29. On 28 March, findings were published of the Israeli military police investigation into the killing of a Palestinian 29-year-old double amputee, Ibrahim Abu Thurayah, during demonstrations close to the Gaza fence on 15 December 2017. The investigation concluded that he had not been killed by Israeli sniper fire.

30. On 25 April, the Jerusalem District Court sentenced an Israeli border police officer, Ben Deri, to nine months' imprisonment after he pleaded guilty for causing death by negligence. According to the Court, Deri shot and killed a 17-year-old Palestinian, Nadeem Nuwara, on 15 May 2014, during the Nakbah demonstrations in Ramallah.

31. On 8 May, an Israeli soldier, Sergeant Elor Azaria, was released after serving two thirds of his sentence (9 months in prison). He had been convicted in February 2017 of manslaughter for shooting and killing an incapacitated Palestinian after the latter had reportedly stabbed an Israeli soldier in Hebron in March 2016. Sergeant Azaria's initial sentence of 18 months had been reduced to 14 months in September 2017.

32. On 29 March, for the first time, an Israeli court convicted an Israeli national of membership in a terrorist organization for participating in a "price tag" attack against Palestinians. In the first four months of 2018, 23 Israelis suspected of involvement in "price tag" attacks, many of them minors, were reportedly indicted and 13 were issued administrative orders, limiting their access to the West Bank.

33. On 1 May, indictments were filed with the Jerusalem District Court against three Palestinians from East Jerusalem for allegedly conspiring to carry out shooting attacks in the West Bank under the guidance and sponsorship of Hamas. On 27 May, additional indictments were filed by the Israeli prosecution authorities against suspected members of a cell for allegedly planning attacks against high-level targets, including the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, and diplomatic missions in Jerusalem.

IV. Incitement, provocation and inflammatory rhetoric

34. In its resolution 2334 (2016), the Security Council called upon both parties to act on the basis of international law, including international humanitarian law, and their previous agreements and obligations, to observe calm and restraint and to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric and called for compliance with obligations under international law for the strengthening of ongoing efforts to combat terrorism and to clearly condemn all acts of terrorism. Provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric continued during the reporting period.

35. On 30 April, during his opening speech at the Palestinian National Council, the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, made statements that included the unacceptable suggestion that the social behaviour of Jews was the cause of the Holocaust and said that Israel was "an imperialist project". Those statements were widely condemned by the international community, and Mr. Abbas subsequently apologized, emphasizing that the Holocaust was "the most heinous crime in history". A senior Palestinian religious leader and adviser to the President also made statements calling any Jewish connection to Jerusalem an "imperialist myth".

36. At the height of the Gaza protests, a senior Hamas official called upon protesters to "take down the border and tear out their [i.e. Israelis'] hearts", one of several public calls by Hamas leaders inciting protesters to violence, including on social media. As in previous reporting periods, Fatah's official social media pages continued to glorify the perpetrators of past terrorist attacks. According to media reports, during one of the protests, another Hamas official delivered a speech calling upon protesters to welcome "martyrdom" before thousands of them streamed towards the perimeter fence.

37. Israeli officials also made provocative and inflammatory statements. In a radio interview, a senior Israeli minister asserted that, in Gaza, "everyone is affiliated with

Hamas", justifying the use of live fire against demonstrators. Separately, an Israeli Member of the Knesset tweeted that a Palestinian teenager, Ahed Tamimi, currently sentenced for slapping Israeli soldiers, should have "gotten a bullet, at least in the kneecap". Senior Israeli politicians also continued to call for the annexation of the settlements, denying that the Palestinian territories were occupied, and for open rejection of the Palestinian right to statehood.

V. Affirmative steps to reverse negative trends

38. Resolution 2334 (2016) reiterated the calls by the Middle East Quartet for affirmative steps to be taken immediately to reverse the negative trends on the ground that are imperilling the two-State solution. The period witnessed both positive and negative actions by the parties in this regard.

39. Significant progress was made towards finalizing a power purchase agreement, which would enable the Palestinian Authority to exercise operational and commercial responsibility over electricity connection points in the West Bank. Outstanding issues to be resolved include bank guarantees and Israeli access to clearance revenues in the event of a default on payments.

40. On 7 June, Israel reinstated the 24-hour operations of the King Hussein (Allenby) Bridge crossing between Jordan and the West Bank during weekdays. That arrangement will be in place until 13 September.

41. Progress continued on the reconstruction in Gaza of houses completely destroyed during the conflict in 2014, with work on more than 400 houses completed during the reporting period. Nearly 13,500 of the 17,800 houses completely destroyed have been rebuilt. The temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism continues to play an important role in the reconstruction, as well as in new construction work in Gaza. However, despite a significant improvement since the beginning of the year in Israeli approvals for materials to enter Gaza, there has not been a significant increase in imports, and the number of new submissions under the Mechanism has also declined. This is due largely to the drop in purchasing power and international assistance for reconstruction.

42. The Rafah crossing with Egypt was open for six days, from 12 to 17 May, for the crossing of humanitarian cases and pre-registered Palestinians in Gaza, including students and those with dual nationalities and residences. On 17 May, Egypt announced that the opening would be extended throughout the holy month of Ramadan and that entry would also be possible for people injured during the Great Return March. This was the longest uninterrupted opening of the Rafah crossing since October 2014. Since 26 March, more than 14,000 Palestinians have crossed into Egypt, while more than 3,300 have crossed into Gaza. The adjacent Hamas-controlled Salah al-Din Gate was open for 26 days during the reporting period, with more than 1,100 trucks entering Gaza, loaded mainly with food commodities, construction materials and fuel.

43. On 30 April, the Palestinian National Council convened in Ramallah for the first time in 22 years, re-electing Mr. Abbas as Chair. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Hamas boycotted the meeting. The final statement of the Palestinian National Council reiterated the commitment to a peaceful solution based on long-standing parameters and United Nations resolutions. The same statement stressed the need to implement the decision of the Central Council, made at its past two sessions, to stop all forms of security coordination and to be free from the economic dependency ties established by the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations, including the economic boycott of occupation products, in support of the independence of the

national economy and its growth. It also mandated the Executive Committee to suspend the recognition of Israel until Israel recognizes the State of Palestine on the basis of the borders of 4 June 1967 and repeals the decision to annex East Jerusalem and stop the settlements. It also endorsed a set of political moves to join various international treaties and to seek international protection for the Palestinian people.

44. The process of returning the Gaza Strip to Palestinian government control came to a halt after the convoy of the Prime Minister, Rami Hamdallah, was targeted in Gaza by a roadside bomb on 13 March, as no senior Palestinian government official has since travelled to Gaza. Egypt continued its efforts to revive the process, holding talks with senior Hamas and Fatah officials.

45. The Government of the State of Palestine has maintained its restrictive measures against Gaza since April 2017, including cuts of up to 50 per cent in the salaries of tens of thousands of public sector employees in Gaza. Most recently, the Government failed to pay these reduced salaries for the month of March and applied salary cuts of approximately 50 per cent when it paid April salaries on 3 May and May salaries on 4 June.

46. The health sector of Gaza has struggled to deal with the mass influx of casualties and injuries related to the recent protests, with essential health services already on the edge of collapse after 10 years of Israeli closures, Hamas control and Palestinian Authority measures to reduce electricity payments for Gaza. Medical supplies are significantly depleted, and access to health care for non-trauma patients is being compromised. Foreign medical teams have been urgently requested to provide specialized vascular, orthopaedic and reconstructive care. Some 49 per cent of essential medicines, including 74 per cent of cancer drugs, and 29 per cent of medical disposables are at zero stock level as a result of funding shortages.

47. Power cuts in Gaza continued to reach up to 22 hours per day, severely undermining the provision of essential services. At current consumption rates, donor funds are available for the United Nations to distribute emergency fuel to power critical water, sanitation and health facilities only until early August. On 12 April, the Gaza power plant ceased production, owing reportedly to a lack of funds to purchase fuel, with a brief resumption from 30 May to 5 June. Following the closure of the power plant, the only reliable source of electricity in Gaza came from Israel, as the supply from Egypt continued to be inoperable. Such limited supply meets less than one quarter of the demand and has resulted in an average of four hours of electricity per day. Water is piped to households for a few hours only every four to five days.

48. On 4, 11 and 14 May, Palestinian protesters burned and looted equipment and installations on the Palestinian side of the Kerem Shalom crossing. Nevertheless, coordination between Israel and the Palestinian Authority enabled a speedy resumption of essential imports, including medical supplies, fuel and other food and non-food items, as well as agricultural exports. Despite substantial damage caused on 11 May, the volume of truck traffic through the crossing had reached almost normal levels within five days. However, the specialized transfer equipment, including pumps and conveyor belts, was rendered unusable. The United Nations continues to work with the parties to ensure urgent, safe and reliable solutions for all critical supplies, particularly cooking gas and fuel for the private sector.

49. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is facing an unprecedented $250 million shortfall. The Agency and its stakeholders are making every effort to ensure that 526,000 Palestine refugee students will be able to attend the following school year without interruption. On 15 March, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, Jordan and Sweden co-chaired an extraordinary ministerial conference, attended by some 90 Member States, to provide sufficient, predictable and sustained funding to UNRWA by building new

funding alliances, reaffirming support for the UNRWA mandate and overcoming the Agency's unprecedented shortfall of $446 million. Some $100 million was pledged at the conference. In April, over $100 million was pledged by other partners, notably the Gulf States. Despite these crucial contributions, the shortfall remains at $250 million.

VI. Efforts by the parties and the international community to advance the peace process and other relevant developments

50. In its resolution 2334 (2016), the Security Council called upon all States to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967. During the reporting period, there were no developments related to States' doing so.

51. In the same resolution, the Council called upon all parties to continue to exert collective efforts to launch credible negotiations, including through the acceleration of international and regional diplomatic efforts and support aimed at achieving, without delay, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. No progress was achieved during the reporting period.

52. On 15 May, the State of Palestine submitted a request for membership in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. On 17 May, it deposited instruments of accession to the Constitution of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, which entered into force for the State on the same day, and to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, which was to enter into force for the State on 16 June. On 6 June, Palestine deposited instruments of accession to seven international conventions and treaties, including the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

53. Following its recognition on 6 December 2017 of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the United States of America opened its embassy to Israel in Jerusalem on 14 May. That move, which was followed on 16 and 21 May by similar actions by Guatemala and Paraguay, respectively, was objected to by several other States.

54. On 17 May, the Council of the League of Arab States held an extraordinary ministerial meeting in Cairo on confronting the United States decision to move its embassy to the occupied city of Jerusalem, the development of the situation and condemnation of the crimes committed by the Israeli occupation in Palestine. Its member States adopted a resolution in which, inter alia, they condemned and rejected the recognition of Jerusalem by the United States as the capital of Israel and the relocation of its embassy.

55. At its seventh Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference, held on 18 May, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) called for the provision of international protection for the Palestinian people, including through the dispatch of an international protection force, as well as for the establishment by the OIC General Secretariat of an international independent mechanism for alleged crimes committed by the Israel Defense Forces against the Palestinian people. The OIC Summit also underscored its rejection of the United States proclamation of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the relocation of the Embassy of the United States.

56. A number of other States expressed their condemnation of the deaths in Gaza.

57. On 1 June, the Security Council voted on but did not adopt two draft resolutions related to the high number of casualties during the protests on 14 May and to the

rockets and mortar rounds launched from Gaza towards Israel on 29 and 30 May. On 13 June, the resolution that had been proposed to the Council by Kuwait, on the protection of the Palestinian civilian population, was presented to the General Assembly for a vote and adopted.

58. On 15 May, during the meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Gaza, several Member States requested the Secretariat to bring forward proposals to address the situation in Gaza, in line with the commitment to advancing urgent infrastructure and economic development projects, improving access and movement in Gaza and supporting the Egyptian-led reconciliation process. In this regard, my Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process outlined, in his briefing to the Council on 23 May, a proposal prioritizing projects identified and agreed over the past two years by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, focusing primarily on improving water, energy and health infrastructure, as well as income-generating activities; enhancing United Nations project management capacity in Gaza to accelerate the implementation of the prioritized projects; and strengthening coordination with the Governments of Egypt, Israel and the State of Palestine. In the weeks since, he has continued to engage with all sides to advance those proposals.

59. On 18 May, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution S-28/1, in which it decided to urgently dispatch an independent, international commission of inquiry, to be appointed by the President of the Human Rights Council, to investigate all alleged violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly in the occupied Gaza Strip, in the context of the military assaults on the large-scale civilian protests that began on 30 March.

60. On 22 May, pursuant to articles 13 (a) and 14 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the State of Palestine requested the Prosecutor to investigate, in accordance with the temporal jurisdiction of the Court, past, ongoing and future crimes within the Court's jurisdiction, committed in all parts of the territory of the State of Palestine. Following the referral, also on 22 May, the Prosecutor issued a statement in which she noted that, since 16 January 2015, the situation in Palestine had been subject to a preliminary examination in order to ascertain whether the criteria for opening an investigation had been met. That preliminary examination has seen important progress and will continue to follow its normal course, strictly guided by the requirements of the Rome Statute.

VII. Observations

61. The settlement activities of Israel continue unabated and undermine the hopes and the practical prospects for establishing a viable Palestinian State. The decision on 30 May by Israel to advance, approve and tender some 3,500 housing units in the occupied West Bank, the largest single batch of advancements since June 2017, creates yet more obstacles to advancing a negotiated two-State solution. I reiterate that all settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, constitutes a flagrant violation under international law, as stated in resolution 2334 (2016), and must cease immediately and completely.

62. The ruling of 24 May of the High Court of Justice to enable the demolition of almost all structures in Khan al-Ahmar — Abu al-Helu puts the community at imminent risk. I am also concerned that the decision represents a significant precedent and threat for other Bedouin herder communities across Area C of the occupied West Bank. I call upon the Government of Israel to cancel its plans to carry out the mass demolition and the transfer of the residents of Khan al-Ahmar — Abu al-Helu, and

remind all parties that such actions within an occupied territory may constitute a grave breach of international humanitarian law.

63. In Gaza, the reporting period witnessed the immense suffering of the people and the most serious escalation since the conflict between Hamas and Israel in 2014. It is and should be a warning to all as to how close to the brink of war the situation is. Only by changing the reality on the ground — by recognizing and addressing the plight of Palestinians in Gaza, by ensuring that all sides recommit to the 2014 ceasefire understandings and by supporting Egyptian-led efforts to restore control by the legitimate Government of the State of Palestine in Gaza — can the possibility of a viable, independent and fully representative Palestinian State be preserved and another disastrous, lethal conflict averted. I unequivocally condemn the steps by all parties that have led to this dangerous and fragile place.

64. I am shocked by the number of deaths and injuries of Palestinians resulting from the use of live fire by the Israel Defense Forces since protests began along the Gaza perimeter fence on 30 March. Israel has a responsibility to exercise maximum restraint in the use of live fire and to not use lethal force, except as a last resort against imminent threat of death or serious injury. It must protect its citizens, but it must do so with due respect of international humanitarian law. The killing of children, as well as of clearly identified journalists and medical staff, by security forces during a demonstration is particularly unacceptable. Journalists and medical staff must be allowed to perform their duties without fear of death or injury. Attacks on medical teams in Gaza not only risk the life and health of staff and patients but also undermine the overall capacity of the health system of Gaza. Noting that the Israel Defense Forces have established a team to examine recent events, I reiterate my calls for an independent and transparent investigation into these incidents.

65. The actions of Hamas and other militant groups put at risk not only the lives of Israelis and Palestinians but also the efforts to restore dignity and the prospects of a liveable future for Palestinians in Gaza. In the context of the Great March of Return, some have attempted to breach or place explosives at or near the fence, exploiting and undermining the legitimate right of individuals to protest non-violently. Rockets launched towards Israel on 29 and 30 May have brought us closer to all-out conflict than we have seen since 2014. All these actions are unacceptable and, in the case of the indiscriminate firing of rockets at civilian populations, may constitute a violation of international humanitarian law. Hamas and others must prevent the launch of rockets and breach of the fence, as escalation only costs more precious lives.

66. The incitement by the Hamas leadership of protesters in Gaza inflamed and encouraged a highly volatile situation that contributed to violent actions at the fence and risked serious escalation. On several occasions, Hamas leaders directly called upon protesters to breach the fence and seek martyrdom. Statements from senior Israeli government officials falsely asserting that all Palestinians there were affiliated with Hamas, and thus legitimate targets, signalled a permissive Israeli policy towards the use of live fire against protesters and contributed to the tragedy that the international community has witnessed over the past 11 weeks.

67. Provocative rhetoric by Palestinian and Israeli officials during the reporting period also continue to undermine trust between the parties and do not serve the interests of peace in the Middle East. Leaders have a responsibility to reduce, not augment, tensions, to build bridges, not create obstacles, and to confront conspiracy theories, not perpetuate them.

68. I note the decision by the Government of Israel to increase investment in occupied East Jerusalem. While gaps in infrastructure and service delivery in Palestinian neighbourhoods have long been a concern, some elements, as well as the accompanying political rhetoric, raise concerns, particularly among Palestinians in

East Jerusalem, that the planned steps could undermine their political, cultural and economic connections with the rest of the West Bank, threaten their properties and deepen control by Israel over Jerusalem. I reiterate that unilateral steps by any party seeking to alter the character or prejudge the final status of Jerusalem, which must be determined by the parties through negotiations on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, taking into account the legitimate concerns of both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides, are inconsistent with United Nations resolutions and are an obstacle to peace.

69. The convening of the Palestinian National Council for the first time in 22 years was a welcome development. However, I express concern at some aspects of its final statement, particularly the provision to stop all forms of security coordination and to be free from the economic dependency ties established by the Paris Protocol, including the economic boycott of occupation products, in support of the independence of the national economy and its growth, and to suspend the recognition of Israel until it recognizes the State of Palestine on the basis of the borders of 4 June 1967 and repeals the decision to annex East Jerusalem and stop the settlements. If taken, such steps could reverse progress attained through years of negotiations and efforts spent building Palestinian national institutions, while making a return to meaningful negotiations even more difficult.

70. I am deeply concerned by the economic collapse in Gaza. In addition to the impact of the restrictive closure regime, the non-payment of salaries by the Government of the State of Palestine to Palestinian employees in Gaza further compounds the situation, already marked by a severe liquidity crisis and an acute shortage of cash. This and other dangerous measures must be rolled back and no new ones imposed. Efforts to preserve the links and unite Gaza with the West Bank must continue, starting with the return of Gaza to the full control of the legitimate Government of the State of Palestine. The success of any initiative in Gaza is linked to a credible political horizon that unites all Palestinians.

71. I have continuously warned of the risks of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. Today, the desperate situation is compounded by the potential suspension of key United Nations programmes, a lifeline for Palestinians in Gaza. The precarious financial situation of UNRWA is of particular concern, not only for approximately 1 million Palestine refugees in Gaza who receive food and other humanitarian assistance, but also for recipients of UNRWA services throughout the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. The substantial shortfall of $250 million, if not urgently met, runs the serious risk of disrupting the Agency's services. The additional instability caused by such a development in a region already wracked by conflict can, and must, be prevented, if all act now to address the gap. I call upon all Member States to further support UNRWA, including on the occasion of the pledging conference to be held in New York on 25 June.

72. I welcome the cooperation between the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to ensure that the Kerem Shalom crossing, critical to humanitarian delivery, continues to function with minimal interruptions despite three rounds of damage caused by Palestinian protesters. Looking ahead, and taking into consideration its legitimate security concerns, I urge Israel to ease the movement of goods and people to and from Gaza. Only by a full lifting of the debilitating closures, in line with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), can we hope to sustainably resolve the humanitarian crisis and begin the important task of development. I also welcome the decision by Egypt to open the Rafah border crossing during the holy month of Ramadan, and hope for more regular movement through the crossing.

73. I remain greatly concerned by the state of our collective efforts to advance peace, and I urge key regional and international partners to re-engage and remain

steadfast in pursuit of a two-State solution. I reaffirm my commitment to the Middle East Quartet, which remains the pre-eminent forum in which to discuss perspectives for resolving the conflict.

74. Given the interconnected nature of conflicts throughout the region and the iconic nature of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that can feed extremist narratives, creating the conditions for the parties to return to meaningful bilateral negotiations remains critical.

75. I welcome discussions in the Security Council of ideas to confront the untenable situation in Gaza by advancing infrastructure and development projects, improving access and movement and supporting the vital Egyptian-led reconciliation process. My Special Coordinator will continue to engage constructively with the Government of the State of Palestine and with Egypt, Israel and key international partners to move forward with a quick implementation of a set of relatively modest, achievable interventions that will have an immediate impact on the lives of Palestinians in Gaza and support longer-term development initiatives. Ultimately, these efforts are meant to strengthen, not replace, overarching political objectives. Economic development, critical as it is, is no substitute for sovereignty and statehood.

76. I strongly condemn, as I have consistently done, unilateral measures, which jeopardize the prospect of peace for Israelis and Palestinians. In its resolution 2334 (2016), the Security Council explicitly underlined that it would not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations.

77. Gaza cannot be ignored or dealt with out of context; it is an integral part of the Palestinian story. The plight of Palestinians in Gaza brings into sharp relief the fact that the current trajectory, not only in Gaza but also throughout the occupied Palestinian territory and in Israel, is not sustainable. The multifaceted crisis in Gaza can ultimately be resolved only if the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict is addressed, by ending the occupation; resolving all final status issues, including the status of Jerusalem, the Palestine refugees, borders and security arrangements; and establishing a viable, independent Palestinian State that will achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in line with relevant United Nations resolutions, prior agreements and international law. I reiterate that there is no viable alternative to the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

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Letter dated 14 June 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period from 12 to 14 June 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

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Annex to the letter dated 14 June 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (12 June 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 10 incidents of gunfire: 6 in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and 4 in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has not reported any incidents of gunfire.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations over the past 24 hours.

In total, 1,834 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,611.56 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to nine residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 83,276 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,515.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (13 June 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported three incidents of gunfire in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported three incidents of gunfire in Hama Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Yalda, Damascus Governorate. In total, 30 tons of construction materials were delivered.

In total, 1,835 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,641.56 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 10 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 83,286 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,515.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (14 June 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported four incidents of gunfire: three in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and one in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported one incident of gunfire in Hama Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations over the past 24 hours.

In total, 1,835 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,641.56 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to eight residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 83,294 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,515.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

United Nations S/2018/616

Security Council

Distr.: General
19 June 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 18 June 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period from 15 to 18 June 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) D. **Polyanskiy**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

18-10031 (E) 210618 210618

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Annex to the letter dated 18 June 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (15 June 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported seven incidents of gunfire: five in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and two in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported one incident of gunfire.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out three humanitarian operations: one in Jubb al-Safa, Aleppo Governorate (445 food parcels with a total weight of 1.9 tons were delivered to people in need); one in Khiyarat Dannun, Qunaytirah Governorate (650 food parcels with a total weight of 2.8 tons were delivered to civilians); and one in Tabiyah, Dayr al-Zawr Governorate (650 food parcels with a total weight of 2.3 tons were delivered).

In total, 1,838 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 139 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 83,422 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,515.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (16 June 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 18 incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: 14 in Ladhiqiyah, 3 in Hama and 1 in Aleppo.

The Turkish representative office has not reported any incidents of gunfire.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations over the past 24 hours.

In total, 1,838 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,648.56 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to seven residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 83,429 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,515.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (17 June 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported eight incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: four in Aleppo, three in Ladhiqiyah and one in Hama.

The Turkish representative office has reported one incident of gunfire in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations over the past 24 hours.

In total, 1,838 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,648.56 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to eight residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 83,437 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,515.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (18 June 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported five incidents of gunfire: three in Aleppo Governorate and two in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported two incidents of gunfire: one in Hama Governorate and one in Idlib Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations over the past 24 hours.

In total, 1,838 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,648.56 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 24 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 83,461 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,515.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

United Nations S/2018/617

Security Council

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19 June 2018

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Review of United Nations cross-border operations

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction and methodology

1. In its resolution 2165 (2014), the Security Council authorized United Nations humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners to use routes across conflict lines and the border crossings at Bab al-Salam, Bab al-Hawa, Ya'rubiyah and Ramtha, in addition to the crossings already in use, in order to ensure that humanitarian assistance, including medical and surgical supplies, reached people in need throughout the Syrian Arab Republic by the most direct routes, with notification to the Syrian authorities, and to that end stressed the need for all border crossings to be used efficiently for United Nations humanitarian operations. The Council initially authorized the operations for 6 months, then extended the authorization for 12-month periods in resolutions 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016) and 2393 (2017). Most recently, the Council extended the operations until 10 January 2019.

2. Since the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014), the United Nations humanitarian response has included humanitarian assistance deliveries through three possible avenues: (a) assistance provided from within the Syrian Arab Republic to regularly accessible areas by United Nations agencies based in Damascus; (b) assistance provided from within the country, across conflict lines, by United Nations agencies based in Damascus; and (c) assistance provided by United Nations agencies, together with Syrian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as implementing partners, from across the country's borders to areas not controlled by the Government. All deliveries from within the country to regularly accessible areas and across conflict lines are carried out with the agreement of the Syrian authorities, from which the United Nations obtains facilitation letters for all deliveries. Cross-border deliveries are effected by United Nations agencies, together with implementing partners, and are notified to the Syrian authorities by the United Nations in order to confirm the humanitarian nature of those relief consignments; however, as they were authorized by resolution 2165 (2014) and subsequent resolutions, they do not require the agreement of the Syrian authorities.

3. The present review is submitted pursuant to paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 2393 (2017), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to conduct, within six months of the adoption of the resolution, an independent written review of United Nations humanitarian cross-border operations, including recommendations on how to further strengthen the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic, taking into account the views of relevant

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parties, including the Syrian authorities, the relevant neighbouring countries of the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Nations humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners.

4. In line with that mandate, the present review is focused solely on the delivery of cross-border humanitarian assistance by the United Nations. Three key aspects of the response are highlighted in detail in the review: the technical functioning of the operations, with a specific focus on the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism; the impact of the operations on people in need in the country; and the accountability mechanisms in place for projects that are managed remotely.

5. While NGOs carry out significant relief operations, in particular as relates to service provision, the present report does not cover their cross-border operations or deliveries. The information contained herein is based on data available from a wide variety of sources. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was provided with detailed written input by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The Office conducted extensive consultations with all relevant actors in Amman, Ankara, Baghdad, Damascus and Gaziantep (Turkey). All interlocutors were provided with specific questions before the interviews (see annex). Particular efforts were made to take into account the views of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as those of the Governments of Iraq, Jordan and Turkey, from where the United Nations cross-border operations are carried out. Consultations were held with the full range of humanitarian coordination forums and actors involved in United Nations cross-border operations, including the Strategic Steering Group, the Humanitarian Liaison Group and the Cross-Border Task Force, and, at the intersectoral level, with specific sectors, individual agencies and NGOs, both Syrian and international. Meetings were also held with donors to humanitarian operations through the regular channels in place for briefing Member States in Jordan and Turkey. A thorough desk review was also carried out to compile existing information on United Nations cross-border operations since 2014.

II. Technical operations

6. The delivery of United Nations cross-border assistance is based on the Organization's assessments of needs and is also coordinated with all relevant partners. It is preceded by a notification to the Syrian authorities and implemented in cooperation with a range of agencies' implementing partners, officials of neighbouring countries and the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism. Overall, the success of delivery depends upon a coordinated response by humanitarian actors throughout the Syrian Arab Republic.

7. As with any aid delivery from within the Syrian Arab Republic, assistance provided across borders pursuant to resolution 2165 (2014) and subsequent resolutions renewing the relevant decisions therein is rooted in humanitarian principles and based on independent assessments of need by the Organization. All United Nations programming is conducted in response to needs identified in the annual humanitarian needs overview. The overview prepared for the Syrian Arab Republic is one of the more robust multisectoral needs assessments in any humanitarian operation around the globe. For the most recent overview, prepared in 2017, 31 humanitarian partners conducted assessments in 5,154 communities, with 98 per cent carried out in the form of face-to-face interviews with 140,000 Syrians, to assess needs across multiple sectors.

8. All United Nations agencies and most, but not all, NGOs working across borders participate in the relevant humanitarian coordination structures and operate under the humanitarian response plan. In addition, significant non-humanitarian operations, such as support for local councils, are under way in cross-border areas. Those operations do not fall under the humanitarian coordination umbrella, but their activities have an impact on certain aspects of United Nations humanitarian assistance.

9. Needs assessments are updated at least twice a year, and efforts are made to review needs quarterly. Such regular and detailed assessments are now particularly critical because the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic is evolving rapidly. Mass internal displacement has stretched the response, with an estimated 2.8 million people displaced in 2017 and over 920,000 displaced in the first four months of 2018, many to areas reachable only by cross-border operations. It has also shown that independent needs assessments remain as critical as ever to ensuring transparency, effectiveness and accountability.

10. Based on the overall assessments, individual cross-border shipments are initiated by United Nations agencies in coordination with humanitarian partners, such as food security or health clusters. Each agency submits a shipment plan to the logistics cluster, which then submits a compilation of all agency requests to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 72 hours prior to the expected departure time of the consignment. The Office uses the information provided to send the first notification of the intended shipment to the Syrian authorities. That notification provides information on expected crossing dates, the border crossing to be used, a description of the humanitarian goods to be delivered, the number of trucks, the United Nations owner and the destination (district). The Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator (for the cross-border operation based in Turkey) or the Humanitarian Coordinator (for Jordan or Iraq) passes the information on to the Syrian authorities in the form of a note verbale relayed by the Humanitarian Coordinator in the Syrian Arab Republic 48 hours prior to the departure of the convoy. Any changes in the consignments are communicated using the same process.

11. On the day of a delivery, trucks from the originating country travel to the border, where aid is monitored and transferred to Syrian trucks for delivery in the Syrian Arab Republic. In the operation based in Turkey, the facility where aid is transferred between trucks is located inside Turkey, in Jordan the location is in the border zone, and in Iraq the trucks meet at the zero point and remain on their respective sides. In all countries, the logistics cluster managed by WFP coordinates most aspects of the trans-shipment process, hiring security guards (as needed) and labour to load the Syrian trucks, liaising with customs agencies and ensuring information-sharing and coordination among the United Nations agencies, the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism, the Department of Safety and Security and implementing partners.

12. In Turkey, Syrian trucks, once loaded with humanitarian items and confirmed by the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism (see sect. III below), are accompanied by the Turkish authorities and members of the logistics cluster and Mechanism from the trans-shipment area to the border crossing point.

13. In Jordan, IOM manages the fleet of Syrian trucks that carry assistance. Unlike the trucks that transport assistance from Turkey and Iraq, the fleet managed by IOM is based in Jordan and crosses into the Syrian Arab Republic only to make humanitarian deliveries, after which it returns to Jordan the same day. To be able to complete those deliveries, the trucks must be loaded the night before, after which they are sealed by both the United Nations and customs officials. The Jordanian authorities escort all movements in the border area until the vehicles cross into the Syrian Arab Republic.

14. In Iraq, where only two cross-border movements have been conducted, procedures may evolve further as the border crossing point is rehabilitated.

15. At the Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salam border crossings with Turkey, as well as in Ramtha (at the border with Jordan), there are scanners that examine each truck to provide a detailed view of its contents. A scanner will soon be installed in Ya'rubiyah, at the border with Iraq. In Bab al-Hawa and Ramtha, all Syrian trucks are scanned by the authorities before entering the border area from the Syrian Arab Republic. In Bab al-Salam, Syrian trucks entering Turkey are scanned at random. For additional security, the authorities may also use canine units (as is the case in Jordan), metal detectors and physical scans before trucks are allowed to cross the border from the Syrian Arab Republic.

16. Once across the border, the Syrian trucks deliver aid to the warehouse of the implementing partner in the area, as notified to the Syrian authorities. The assistance is then delivered and distributed to beneficiaries or provided to support essential services, as outlined in the humanitarian response plan. In some cases, the aid is pre-positioned to ensure that assistance can be maintained in the event of a temporary suspension of cross-border activity. That was the case, for example, in Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salam during increased hostilities in late January 2018, when shelling from the Syrian Arab Republic into the border areas caused the United Nations to halt operations for 10 days (21–31 January), as well as in Ramtha in the middle of 2016, following an attack on a Jordanian border point that resulted in the entire border area being declared a military zone and cross-border operations being halted for five weeks.

17. The following measures are recommended:

(a) Continue regular, high-quality independent assessments of need to ensure that assistance is based on needs and delivered in accordance with humanitarian principles and that funds are raised in line with needs;

(b) Increase coordination with actors not operating under the humanitarian response plan to further improve the quality of the response;

(c) As the Ya'rubiyah border crossing becomes fully operational, share good practices from other border crossing points to ensure the smooth functioning of operations there.

III. United Nations Monitoring Mechanism

18. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism has 41 staff members and an annual budget of $3.5 million. Its mandate, as set out in Security Council resolution 2165 (2014), is to monitor, with the consent of the relevant neighbouring countries of the Syrian Arab Republic, the loading of all humanitarian relief consignments of the United Nations humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners at the relevant United Nations facilities, and any subsequent opening of the consignments by the customs authorities of the relevant neighbouring countries, for passage into the Syrian Arab Republic through the border crossings of Bab al-Salam, Bab al-Hawa, Ya'rubiyah and Ramtha, with notification by the United Nations to the Syrian authorities, in order to confirm the humanitarian nature of those consignments.

19. That mandate is made operational through teams working at each of the border crossing points, under a single set of procedures to ensure consistency of operations across hubs. The Mechanism works exclusively in the territory of the relevant neighbouring countries of the Syrian Arab Republic, namely, Iraq, Jordan and Turkey. Its mandate does not include monitoring the delivery of assistance within the Syrian

Arab Republic. United Nations agencies and their implementing partners bear full responsibility for the consignments and their contents within the country.

20. For each of the four border crossings named in resolution 2165 (2014), a monitoring team, including a team leader, monitoring officers and support personnel, is assigned to the operation. To help to ensure that its work is perceived as independent and unbiased, the Mechanism ensures that its staff members are diverse in terms of nationality. In 2017, its international staff came from 17 countries. The humanitarian nature of relief consignments is confirmed on the basis of the following criteria:

(a) The consignment owner must be a United Nations humanitarian agency or an implementing partner;

(b) The consignment must be related to a humanitarian relief activity;

(c) The consignment must not have been manipulated by a third party.

21. The criteria are monitored against positive and negative indicators that are set out in the guidelines for the Mechanism. The monitoring team checks the consignment visually and physically, which includes performing random verifications of humanitarian items. Where applicable, technology (e.g., metal detectors) is used. In the case of a mismatch against the load list or doubt as to the contents of the packages, the team may request an interruption of the loading process pending clarification by the consignment owner. To date, it has not been necessary to request such an interruption.

22. Monitoring teams accompany the customs authorities while they check the consignments. When loading is completed, the team in Jordan monitors the closure of each consignment, together with customs officials. In cases where the receiving trucks remain in the trans-shipment hub overnight after loading (as is the case in Jordan), the monitoring team applies seals and tamper-evident tape to the trucks. The team then checks the seals on the day of the convoy's departure as a safeguard against any manipulation by third parties overnight.

23. When monitored trucks cross into the Syrian Arab Republic, the monitoring team immediately notifies the Chief of the Mechanism, confirming the humanitarian nature of the consignment. On that basis, the Chief then issues a notification to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, confirming that the shipment is humanitarian in nature, through a note verbale sent by the Humanitarian Coordinator in the country. Upon the completion of the operation, the teams archive all monitoring forms as scanned copies in Iraq and Jordan and as hard copies in Turkey.

24. The following measures are recommended:

(a) Ensure continuity of the mandate of the Mechanism — as an independent and trusted body — to allow and facilitate humanitarian deliveries to the Syrian Arab Republic;

(b) Share knowledge with other operations with a monitoring mandate to provide an opportunity to compare best practices.

IV. Impact of United Nations cross-border operations

25. As at May 2018, an estimated 4.88 million people were in need in areas where a significant number continued to be more accessible from across the border than from within the Syrian Arab Republic: 2.67 million of them are in areas to which only United Nations cross-border actors have access, comprising 2.21 million in the north-west and 460,000 in the south. Thanks to United Nations cross-border support, there

have been only few reports of malnutrition, with hundreds of thousands of children screened regularly. Schools are operational and equipped with basic materials provided by the Organization. Supported by United Nations medical supplies, 82 hospitals and 70 mobile clinics are operational, providing critical assistance to those in need.

26. The humanitarian impact of the Organization's cross-border operations is significant, with the areas reached by cross-border deliveries benefiting from regular and sustained assistance. From July 2014 to April 2018, millions of people received humanitarian assistance, many on a monthly basis. A total of 3.7 million people received food assistance; 4.7 million people received water sanitation and hygiene assistance; education supplies were delivered to 946,000 people; and nutrition assistance was provided for 611,000 people. In addition, some 21.1 million medical procedures were conducted. The table provides additional details on total humanitarian deliveries, disaggregated by border crossing point, since 2014.

Total cross-border deliveries, July 2014–April 2018

Country	*Border crossing*	*Consignments*	*Truckloads*
Turkey	Bab al-Hawa	346	13 682
Turkey	Bab al-Salam	194	2 054
Jordan	Ramtha	259	4 480
Iraq	Ya'rubiyah	2	22
Total		**801**	**20 238**

27. In its resolution 2393 (2017), adopted in December 2017, the Security Council noted the impact of the cross-border operations, recalling that the United Nations and its implementing partners continued to deliver life-saving assistance to millions of people in need in the Syrian Arab Republic through humanitarian aid delivered across borders, including food assistance for an average of 1 million people every month since 2016; non-food items for 4 million people; health assistance for 15 million treatments, and water and sanitation supplies for over 3 million people.

28. In 2017, United Nations humanitarian cross-border deliveries represented about 20 per cent of overall humanitarian cross-border deliveries to the Syrian Arab Republic, while NGOs accounted for the remainder. Humanitarian assistance by NGOs is mostly provided through commercial channels, or through a separate monitoring mechanism run by the Turkish Red Crescent Society at 12 crossing points at the border with Turkey. Two border crossings from Turkey are open for commercial access, namely, Bab al-Salam and Bab al-Hawa, the same two crossings authorized by the Security Council for cross-border operations. In addition to being monitored, the shipment process through the Mechanism and the Turkish Red Crescent Society offers the advantage of being able to expedite shipments during emergencies and is therefore able to respond to immediate needs for life-saving assistance. Using the commercial channel also provides NGOs with a predictable shipment schedule for their ongoing humanitarian programmes, along with a well-established customs mechanism.

29. In 2018, United Nations deliveries have provided assistance for one third of the people in need in the north-western and southern parts of the Syrian Arab Republic each month. Those people do not have access to assistance from within the country. The full and complementary use of all delivery options, both from within the country and from neighbouring countries, is necessary in order to gain access to people in need and to ensure that assistance and services are provided to all of them. In making

full use of the various avenues for access, whether across borders, across conflict lines or to regularly accessible areas, efforts were made to ensure that humanitarian assistance was sustained, coordinated and complementary.

30. In the first four months of 2018, food for an average of 887,000 people was delivered each month. This represents an increase of 12 per cent from the average of 793,000 people reached over the same period in 2017. Of those reached in 2017, some 253,000 received United Nations food assistance in the southern part of the Syrian Arab Republic, while approximately 634,000 people were provided with food in the north-west. In addition, health treatments and other assistance, including shelter, non-food items, education and water and sanitation support are provided to hundreds of thousands of people every month.

31. In the monthly report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017) and 2401 (2018), a breakdown of targeted beneficiaries by sector has been provided at the district level since January 2018. That additional level of detail is provided in accordance with resolution 2393 (2017), which calls for more detailed information on humanitarian assistance delivered through United Nations cross-border operations.

32. For many people in need in the south and in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic, cross-border operations remain essential to gaining access to meaningful and predictable humanitarian assistance and essential services. For the United Nations and its partners based in the Syrian Arab Republic, access from Damascus to hard-to-reach areas has been curtailed considerably. More generally, United Nations inter-agency convoys from within the Syrian Arab Republic to hard-to-reach and besieged areas have been severely limited over the past 18 months owing to a lack of security and bureaucratic delays by the Government. Medical and other life-saving items continue to be systematically removed from inter-agency convoys deployed from within the country, with over 600,000 medical items removed in 2017. United Nations cross-border operations play a critical role in ensuring not only that assistance reaches those most in need by the most direct route, but also that the types of assistance and humanitarian items delivered are those that are most needed.

33. Although reporting is focused on the delivery of goods by truck, the impact of the United Nations cross-border response is broader, in particular its support for the functioning of public services, which itself is not a focus of the present review. An important element of the cross-border humanitarian operations conducted by NGOs is their provision of services in areas where regular public services, such as schools or hospitals, are not operational. While the United Nations is not directly involved in such services provided by NGOs, its cross-border assistance, including school supplies and medicine, is essential for the NGOs to provide their services. Thanks to the combination and complementarity of goods provided by the Organization and services provided by NGOs, millions have received life-saving services.

34. United Nations cross-border operations facilitate specialized services, including in the areas of protection of civilians, reproductive health and gender-based violence responses, that benefit the most vulnerable people in the Syrian Arab Republic. Those services would be especially difficult to provide from within the country, where the same level of access might not be sustained. In addition, many of the partners interviewed noted the importance of the trust that had been built between communities and cross-border humanitarian actors over the years, which had created the space to address important issues, such as gender-based violence.

35. The partners interviewed highlighted how United Nations cross-border operations had resulted in more coordinated, efficient and principled humanitarian action. They underlined that the Organization's engagement had strengthened the

sharing of information among humanitarian actors and had helped humanitarian organizations to focus their efforts on the most vulnerable people. Preparedness planning was noted as a particularly important achievement. Partners also stressed the importance of the United Nations in promoting humanitarian principles and developing and disseminating standards and guidelines applying to all humanitarian actors.

36. Another important aspect of the United Nations engagement in cross-border assistance that was highlighted by almost all interlocutors was the importance of capacity-building programmes facilitated by the Organization for Syrian NGOs operating as cross-border implementing partners. One of the largest gaps identified in the review was a lack of trained service providers, such as doctors. Training opportunities have, at times, been limited by the number of Syrian staff who can cross the border to Jordan or Turkey; some agencies have stated that the processes for allowing Syrians to receive the relevant training in those countries could be further streamlined. In Turkey, five humanitarian staff members per organization are given special permission to cross the border from the Syrian Arab Republic each month. The Jordanian authorities have also noted the importance of training Syrian NGOs and have offered to increase, on a case-by-case basis, the number of staff who are authorized to cross the border.

37. The following measures are recommended:

(a) Continue to develop guidance on the provision of assistance and services to ensure effective coordination and coherence in the humanitarian response;

(b) Expand capacity-building efforts for implementing partners to improve the effectiveness of the humanitarian response and to ensure adherence to humanitarian principles and standards.

V. Monitoring assistance delivery

38. While the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism confirms the humanitarian nature of relief consignments, additional layers of monitoring are carried out inside the Syrian Arab Republic. End-use monitoring is a standard practice in humanitarian operations, where the users of the assistance provide feedback on its impact. The United Nations, however, applies higher standards to cross-border assistance transported into the Syrian Arab Republic. This difference is due to several factors, including the fact that the Organization's cross-border operations are managed remotely by the United Nations and its partners and that they are thus unable to visit the distribution or service delivery sites. Remotely managed humanitarian responses are not unique to the Syrian Arab Republic and have been undertaken at other locations around the world where insecurity limits movement. While such operations, by nature, cannot verify end use with absolute certainty, the United Nations and its implementing partners are well versed in ensuring that assistance reaches those for whom it is intended. The Syrian context exhibits a high degree of innovation in addressing potential shortcomings.

39. Monitoring is first performed by the implementing partner, whose responsibility as project manager requires due diligence to ensure a high-quality response. The implementing partners for cross-border operations in the Syrian Arab Republic are in contact with United Nations agencies and with donors almost on a daily basis. Examples of innovation by implementing partners to ensure accountability to agencies and donors include geotagging and time-stamping photographs, and in some cases providing real-time video streams of distribution points to enable direct monitoring.

40. Implementing partners also maintain beneficiary lists that indicate who is to receive the assistance. The lists are based on independent assessments of needs, including vulnerability criteria. Implementing partners use the lists at distribution points and collect the signatures or thumbprints of the beneficiaries when the service and assistance is provided. In some instances, biometric data are used to confirm the identity of beneficiaries. WFP, the largest United Nations cross-border actor, has implemented an advanced beneficiary and management system that makes it possible to prioritize assistance geographically using selection criteria at the household level, including vulnerability factors such as the number of children and older persons in the family, the gender of the head of the household, household income, disabilities among family members and general living conditions, including displacement status and type of accommodation. In 2018, WFP implemented the system to register and assist beneficiaries reached through livelihood support and is now beginning to roll out household verification tools for general food assistance beneficiaries in the south of the Syrian Arab Republic.

41. The implementing partners are organizations that have been vetted by the United Nations and engage regularly and closely with their respective contracting United Nations agencies. Before contracting, assessments are conducted to review the partners' qualifications, including to review their financial audits, their capacity to perform and their adherence to humanitarian principles. Once an implementing partner is selected, its operations are monitored regularly. Implementing partners coordinate with the relevant humanitarian cluster coordination leads and provide monthly updates on their activities to the relevant United Nations agency.

42. The United Nations and donors also use third parties to monitor distribution and services provided by implementing partners. The role of those monitors is to observe the distribution of assistance directly to beneficiaries, to assess distributions at the facility level for items that might be provided to schools, health facilities or child-friendly spaces, to monitor service provision and to audit records as necessary. Third-party monitors contracted by IOM also visit the warehouses maintained by humanitarian partners to confirm the humanitarian nature of the supplies therein and to monitor their distribution.

43. WFP reported that third-party monitoring activities were further strengthened in 2017, with an 8 per cent increase in the number of visits to final distribution points compared with 2016 across all of its operations (i.e., from within the Syrian Arab Republic and across borders). In 2018, the WFP monitoring mechanism was again enhanced for cross-border operations from Jordan, with the allocation of additional third-party monitors and higher percentages of monitoring compared with other parts of the Syrian Arab Republic. WHO reported that qualitative and quantitative third-party monitoring of the supply chain was launched for deliveries of medical items from Turkey in May 2018, with a view to monitoring the supply line from the cross-border hub to the warehouses and on to the receiving health structures.

44. Another layer of monitoring is the cross-checking of information from the field gathered after distribution. Such post-distribution monitoring takes various forms, but one of the most common is beneficiary interviews. Both third parties and implementing partners conduct exit interviews with randomly selected beneficiaries at distribution points to verify the quantity and quality of items received and to elicit their perspectives on the distribution process. In addition, assistance is labelled with contact details so that beneficiaries can contact implementing partners through call centres or use messaging technologies to provide feedback on the aid received. WFP is finalizing plans to use those tools to launch a direct complaint and feedback mechanism that will allow that organization to ensure enhanced accountability and interaction with beneficiaries. Furthermore, feedback from field meetings between implementing partners and beneficiaries, regular reports to humanitarian clusters and

information provided by local authorities at various levels are received regularly. In addition, IOM relies on outcome mapping to track not only the delivery of assistance, but also its impact.

45. In addition to the primary layers of monitoring described above, the cluster system used to coordinate the delivery of assistance provides another layer of accountability, which helps to ensure adherence to humanitarian principles by partners through capacity-building and by defining and implementing system-wide protocols and policies. In addition, Governments hosting cross-border operations provide an added layer of transparency, as they monitor the shipments from and into their territories closely and request accountability and thorough explanations for any deviations from planned operations.

46. The United Nations strives to ensure that there are no irregularities, and there is zero tolerance for the diversion of assistance from intended beneficiaries. Owing to the high-risk environment, it is critical that systems be in place to prevent aid diversion. If the humanitarian community is not able to provide assistance and services in accordance with humanitarian principles, the broader humanitarian operation may be placed at risk, as donors would be less likely to provide support. If it cannot be ensured that assistance reaches the intended beneficiaries, it might be necessary to scale back humanitarian operations significantly or to stop the assistance altogether. As a result, the United Nations has taken preventive actions to reduce the likelihood of aid diversion. Those actions include the development of guidelines for implementing partners and active engagement with non-State armed opposition groups to promote respect for humanitarian principles and the integrity of humanitarian assistance. They also include developing a clear understanding of the nature of the impediments faced. The Organization is also working with implementing partners to ensure that they understand that humanitarian assistance should not be delivered to persons for whom it is not intended and that they have systems in place for identifying, reporting and tackling any cases of delivery of humanitarian assistance to persons for whom it is not intended, should they occur. One example of a preventive measure was the open letter addressed to non-State armed opposition groups in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic, which outlined the actions taken by those groups and stressed that impediments to humanitarian operations were not acceptable. The letter provided a uniform view of such impediments and the risk that armed groups faced if barriers to access to populations in need persisted.

47. Despite such prevention efforts, and as in many locations where the United Nations provides humanitarian assistance around the globe, including from within the Syrian Arab Republic, irregularities in aid deliveries have sometimes been identified in United Nations cross-border operations. Such irregularities have included instances of small-scale diversion, where local authorities or non-State armed opposition groups have been found appropriating aid from intended beneficiaries for their own use. The Organization has not identified any cases of large-scale or systemic diversion of its cross-border assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic.

48. When irregularities are reported, it is critical to ensure full transparency and reporting to the United Nations and to donors. That level of transparency allows the United Nations to take appropriate measures to recover aid and/or to amend procedures to ensure that irregularities do not recur. In a recent example of a transparent response to an irregularity, in April 2018, a convoy from the Ramtha border crossing point to the southern Syrian Arab Republic was delayed in its return, raising concerns of misconduct. Following a thorough review, including with implementing partners and local councils, it was determined that the delay arose because the receiving warehouse was not prepared to receive the convoy, resulting in slower-than-usual offloading. The details regarding the event were compiled and shared with all relevant parties, and the recommended steps were taken to ensure that

the partners at the warehouse were better prepared, thus reducing the likelihood that such delays would occur in the future.

49. While accountability mechanisms are in place, a certain degree of risk is inherent in day-to-day humanitarian operations, whether in Afghanistan, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic or Yemen. Risks are constantly assessed, and some may be deemed inevitable in humanitarian operations. The level of scrutiny of United Nations cross-border operations in the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the level of accountability mechanisms in place, is comparable to or higher than that found in many other humanitarian operations that operate in insecure environments around the world, including deliveries from within the Syrian Arab Republic.

50. The following measures are recommended:

(a) Taken together, the mechanisms in place provide significant checks against issues that might arise; however, those mechanisms come at a significant cost in terms of financial and human resources. Donors must be willing to continue to cover the expenses involved;

(b) As currently planned, beneficiary and management tools such as the system developed by WFP should be utilized more broadly in all areas where it is practicable and feasible.

VI. Views of the Syrian authorities and of neighbouring countries hosting cross-border operations

51. In its resolution 2393 (2017), the Security Council requested that the views of the Syrian authorities and those of relevant neighbouring countries be taken into account in the review of cross-border humanitarian operations. Using a single set of key questions developed for the discussions, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs held meetings with government representatives in the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as in Iraq, Jordan and Turkey.

52. The representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of the Syrian Arab Republic stressed that Security Council resolution 2165 (2014) was an attempt to fuel the crisis in the country and to destabilize the situation further, weakening the Government through the use of politicized humanitarian assistance. The impact of cross-border deliveries on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country was also highlighted as a major issue of concern. The Government has, however, accepted the resolution, participating in the discussions on the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism to ensure its neutrality and impartiality and stipulating that staff members would need to come from countries perceived by the Government to be neutral. The representatives expressed their view that the Mechanism team was not neutral or able to ensure the humanitarian nature of trucks crossing the border. They stressed that "no one knew" where the contents of trucks went after they crossed the border. In the Government's view, the aid was not going to civilians but to terrorist groups. The representatives also stressed that there was no merit to cross-border deliveries, as all areas could be reached from Damascus if gaps in trust were addressed.

53. Representatives at the national operations centre in Iraq stressed that the Government of Iraq acknowledged the "principles of national sovereignty" and supported the "humanitarian principles that underpin the assistance being provided to people in need in the Syrian Arab Republic". They noted that the Iraqi authorities had worked collaboratively with the United Nations in opening the Ya'rubiyah border crossing to accommodate a pilot convoy for United Nations agencies and that they had also facilitated a second convoy. They called for the provision of security

equipment at the border crossing point to ensure maximum protection for convoys and individuals at the border. They also acknowledged the need for "continued dialogue" with the United Nations on cross-border operations at the appropriate levels.

54. In Jordan, the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted the country's long history as a leader in support of United Nations cross-border operations, initially as a pen holder for Security Council resolution 2165 (2014). He expressed his "strong support" for the work of the United Nations. He also emphasized the importance of strong teamwork between the relevant ministries in Jordan and the Organization, highlighting the benefits of information-sharing and engagement. Movements of people in need towards the Jordanian border were raised as an area of concern. He noted the "regularity" of the humanitarian deliveries, stressing that up to that point all deliveries had been humanitarian in nature. He also noted the role of training to strengthen implementing partners and highlighted that those efforts could be improved further with additional United Nations training activities in Jordan.

55. In Turkey, the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that United Nations cross-border deliveries were "vital for people in need in the Syrian Arab Republic", noting that certain areas were not otherwise accessible. He added that support for the operations rested on the "realities on the ground" in the country, which were marked by the humanitarian needs of people close to the borders who could not be reached with humanitarian assistance from within the country, and by "the need to uphold international humanitarian law and humanity". He expressed a preference for full assistance provided from within the Syrian Arab Republic, but noted that it was not currently possible. The potential movement of populations to border areas was raised as a concern, as were the implications that such movements could have for the people displaced and for regional security. He praised the engagement with the United Nations in the implementation of the mandate, calling it the "most legitimate tool" and stressing that the operations had the full support of the Government of Turkey. He also noted the important role of the United Nations review of cross-border operations, primarily in addressing misconceptions about the operations.

VII. Observations

56. United Nations humanitarian cross-border deliveries are the result of an operation that hinges on a range of actors across the United Nations system, as well as on implementing partners, working together in a complex and insecure environment and under a high degree of scrutiny. The aim of the present review was to shed additional light on the processes in place, to highlight innovations that have been introduced to ensure an accountable, effective and transparent operation, and to provide recommendations for further improvements that will ensure more effective operations in the future. The focus of the review was to ensure that people in need received the most effective humanitarian response possible in such a difficult environment.

57. In the second half of 2017, I reported on multiple occasions that United Nations cross-border deliveries were critical and should continue. The recommendations provided herein can further strengthen the Organization's cross-border operations, which is important, as the Organization and its implementing partners must be able to gain access to populations in need rapidly, sustainably and without impediment, based on United Nations assessments of need. Cross-border aid deliveries meet those criteria. The complementarity of all methods of delivery has proved essential to

ensuring that those in need receive life-saving assistance; all approaches to reach those in need remain critical.

58. The year 2018 has seen a rapid evolution of the conflict, including shifts in control of territory and mass movements of people, with over 900,000 people already displaced by the end of April. While the geographical space for cross-border operations has shrunk as areas in the south-east of Idlib have come under the control of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, the size of the population being supported by United Nations cross-border operations has not decreased, and the needs of the people have become ever more acute.

59. The Security Council resolution authorizing United Nations cross-border humanitarian operations was adopted out of dire humanitarian need, with a significant number of people in need of assistance who were inaccessible from within the Syrian Arab Republic. Since 2014, those operations have provided sustained life-saving assistance to millions of people and continue to do so today. While all parties work towards a lasting political solution to end the suffering of the Syrian people, it is important to ensure that basic humanitarian assistance continues to reach people in need throughout the Syrian Arab Republic, regardless of where they live and based solely on needs.

Annex

Questions provided in advance of consultations

Table 1
Questions for humanitarian partners

Review criterion	*Questions*
Humanitarian impact	• Overarching question: To what extent have the United Nations cross-border operations implemented under the framework of Security Council resolution 2165 (2014) saved lives and reduced suffering since the adoption of that resolution?
	• What key metrics should be considered when analysing the humanitarian impact of United Nations cross-border operations?
	• What determining factors are considered by organizations when deciding to deliver assistance through United Nations cross-border assistance modalities in the Syrian Arab Republic? What alternatives are available?
	• To what extent have cross-border operations been able to address needs, in particular acute needs?
	• To what extent have United Nations cross-border operations adhered to humanitarian principles and programming quality standards, including with regard to accountability to affected people and gender considerations?
Practical functioning	• Overarching question: To what extent have United Nations cross-border operations functioned efficiently?
	• Who are the key stakeholders in United Nations cross-border operations and what are their responsibilities?
	• How have United Nations cross-border operations been coordinated? To what extent has the coordination included key stakeholders while ensuring concrete humanitarian outcomes?
	• What have the key challenges (e.g., logistical, capacity, access and security) been?
	• How have United Nations cross-border operations complemented the assistance being provided through other modalities?
	• What opportunities are available to further enhance coordination and/or more effectively and collectively address identified challenges?
Monitoring	• Overarching question: How well do United Nations cross-border operations ensure the accountability of humanitarian action to all stakeholders?
	• How does the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic function and how has it evolved since 2014?
	• What monitoring mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that aid provided through United Nations cross-border operations reaches its intended recipients and is delivered in a principled manner? To what extent are those safeguards effective?
	• How could monitoring be further improved?

Table 2
Questions for Syrian authorities and neighbouring countries of the Syrian Arab Republic hosting cross-border operations

Review criterion	*Questions*
Humanitarian impact	• Overarching question: How do you assess the overall impact of the United Nations cross-border mechanism?
	• What are your recommendations to further improve the humanitarian impact of United Nations cross-border operations?
Practical functioning	• Overarching question: What is your assessment of current United Nations cross-border delivery operations, including the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism?
	• What are your recommendations for strengthening United Nations cross-border operations, including the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism?
	• Is the information provided to the Security Council on a monthly basis sufficient, or could it be made more relevant?
Monitoring	• Overarching question: How would you assess the level of transparency of the United Nations cross-border operation?
	• How can the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism be more efficient in terms of logistics, timeliness and costs and in its work with host Governments?
	• How can the monitoring of and reporting on the end use of United Nations cross-border assistance be strengthened?

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Letter dated 19 June 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to my letter to the President of the Security Council dated 13 June 2018 (S/2018/607), annexing a letter from Anwar Gargash, Cabinet member and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. Upon instructions from my Government, I am pleased to transmit herewith a letter from Reem Al Hashimy, Cabinet member and Minister of State for International Cooperation, regarding recent developments relating to the humanitarian situation in Hudaydah, Yemen (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would arrange for the present letter and its annex to be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Lana **Nusseibeh**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 19 June 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

The operation by the Arab Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen and by the legitimate Government of Yemen to liberate Hudaydah, which is currently under way, is directed at ending the deadlock in the political process resulting from the past three years of intransigence and obstruction by the Houthis, countering the Houthis' continued violations of Security Council resolution 2216 (2015) and addressing the humanitarian consequences of the grossly negligent operation of the port under Houthi control. As a member of the Arab Coalition, the United Arab Emirates is implementing the operation to liberate Hudaydah. That operation is underpinned by the acute awareness of the United Arab Emirates of the humanitarian and human rights aspects of armed conflict, and its deep concern for the welfare of the Yemeni people.

The United Arab Emirates is committed to international humanitarian law and reaffirms its humanitarian commitment to the people of Yemen, regardless of their location and affiliation. To this end, the United Arab Emirates is closely following the humanitarian situation in Hudaydah, and in Yemen as a whole. The purpose of the present letter is to share with the Security Council the latest developments in the humanitarian situation as at 19 June 2018.

The humanitarian situation

The current humanitarian situation in Hudaydah is stable. As a result of the collective efforts of United Nations entities, alongside the efforts of the Arab Coalition, more than 120,000 tons of food is currently stockpiled in Hudaydah. According to World Food Programme estimates, this is sufficient to cover the food needs of 6.6 million people for at least one month.

The Hudaydah and Salif ports are open and are receiving international humanitarian aid: at least eight vessels were able to dock and unload their cargo at Hudaydah port in the past week alone, and more vessels are headed to the port with the expectation that they will be cleared to dock in the next few days.

The Arab Coalition is doing what it can to maintain the existing distribution networks and is committed to ensuring the safe and timely distribution of aid, including through deconfliction for humanitarian convoys.

The Arab Coalition humanitarian "surge" plan

As outlined in the letter dated 13 June 2018 from Anwar Gargash, the Arab Coalition has — as a central and integrated part of the operation to liberate Hudaydah — developed a large-scale and comprehensive humanitarian surge plan for the rapid delivery of aid to Hudaydah and the areas of Yemen that depend on its port. The Coalition successfully implemented similar large-scale aid operations when it liberated Aden, Mukalla and Mukha'.

This multifaceted humanitarian surge plan, which was studied and developed over a period of months, addresses the specific food, fuel, shelter and medical needs of women, girls, boys and men who depend on the port, as well as arrangements to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of humanitarian relief. The plan furthermore comprises contingency measures directed at addressing a broad range of scenarios, such as the displacement of civilians, the obstruction of roads and access points and the destruction of infrastructure perpetrated by the Houthis.

The key features of the humanitarian surge plan are as follows:

(a) The United Arab Emirates has pre-positioned 50,000 tons of food aid in Yemen and other proximate locations, to be deployed in the event that the distribution of aid is disrupted. This includes:

(i) Ten vessels, carrying a total of 35,000 tons of food, already stationed near or en route to Hudaydah. Additional vessels are also pre-positioned for deployment at ports in Saudi Arabia;

(ii) Seven aircraft registered in the United Arab Emirates, with a total airdrop capacity of 14,000 tons, available to launch a humanitarian air bridge in the event that the urgent distribution of aid is required;

(iii) One hundred trucks contracted by the United Arab Emirates to deliver food by convoy from Aden. The first convoy distributed aid south of Hudaydah this week.

Additional aid is currently stockpiled in Aden and other places nearby to ensure broader contingency coverage for Yemen.

(b) In the light of the Houthis' mining of Hudaydah port, the surge plan includes mine-clearing operations to allow for the urgent resumption of large ship movements. Mine-clearing operations are also planned for Hudaydah airport, as part of the Coalition's objective to restore the airport and commence air operations to complement existing aid distribution networks;

(c) The United Arab Emirates is developing alternative networks and routes for the delivery of aid to Hudaydah and points beyond, to be implemented should there be an attempt by the Houthis to damage or destroy Hudaydah port, existing aid distribution networks or other infrastructure.

Coordination with the United Nations and humanitarian actors

The United Arab Emirates affirms that the United Nations and both international and local humanitarian agencies have an essential role to play in ensuring the welfare of the residents of Hudaydah, including on the ground. The United Arab Emirates welcomes the presence of the United Nations in Hudaydah and reiterates its commitment to continuing close coordination with United Nations entities on humanitarian issues. The United Arab Emirates is in constant coordination with the United Nations and international aid agencies through the Evacuation and Humanitarian Operations Committee. The United Arab Emirates is also working closely on the ground with Emirati and Saudi aid agencies, including Emirates Red Crescent and the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre.

The perspectives, concerns and recommendations of United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations and other humanitarian actors are being taken into account, and the military efforts of the Arab Coalition and the legitimate Government of Yemen are carefully calibrated to avoid civilian casualties, minimize damage to vital infrastructure, including Hudaydah port, in conformity with international humanitarian law, and to provide the Houthis with the greatest possible opportunity to withdraw from Hudaydah.

Humanitarian commitment of the United Arab Emirates to Yemen

The efforts by the members of the Arab Coalition to preserve existing aid distribution networks and develop contingency measures to ensure the continued flow of humanitarian relief to Hudaydah and beyond are consistent with their longstanding humanitarian commitment to Yemen and its people. In the period from April 2015 to May 2018, the United Arab Emirates contributed $3.7 billion in aid to Yemen. In

2018, the United Arab Emirates pledged $465 million to support the United Nations humanitarian response plan for Yemen, in addition to the $35 million pledged to restore the airports and seaports of Yemen.

The humanitarian commitment of the United Arab Emirates to Yemen corresponds to that of the other members of the Arab Coalition, as evidenced — for instance — by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Humanitarian Relief Plan for Yemen for the year 2018, detailed in the identical letters dated 23 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2018/62).

Further updates on the humanitarian situation

The United Arab Emirates shares the deep concern of the members of the Security Council for the welfare of Hudaydah's residents and the people who depend upon its port. In this regard, on behalf of my Government, I propose to provide the Security Council with regular updates on the humanitarian situation.

(*Signed*) Reem **Al Hashimy**
Minister of State for International Cooperation